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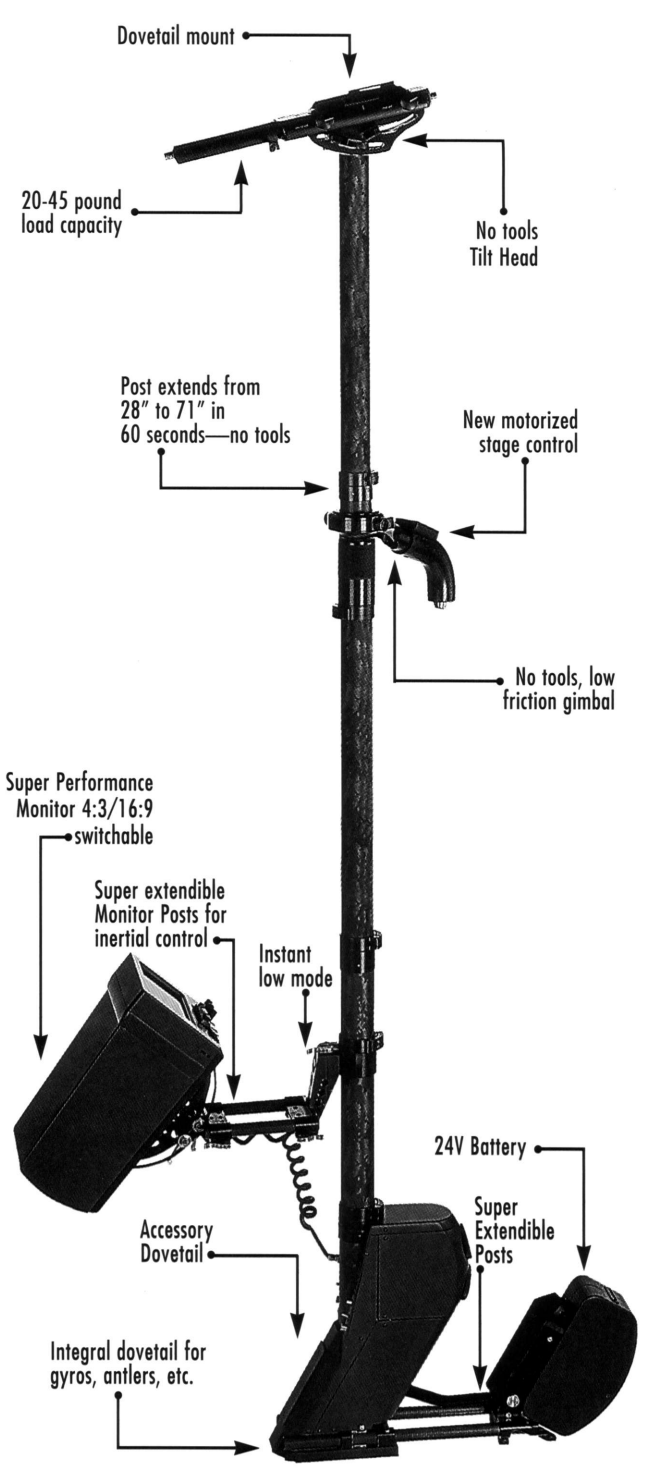

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American Cinematographer
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On Our Cover: Burned-out ambulance medic Frank Pierce (Nicolas Cage) tends to a fallen Manhattanite in *Bringing Out the Dead,* a gritty urban drama directed by Martin Scorsese and photographed by Robert Richardson, ASC (photo by Phil Caruso, courtesy of Paramount Pictures).

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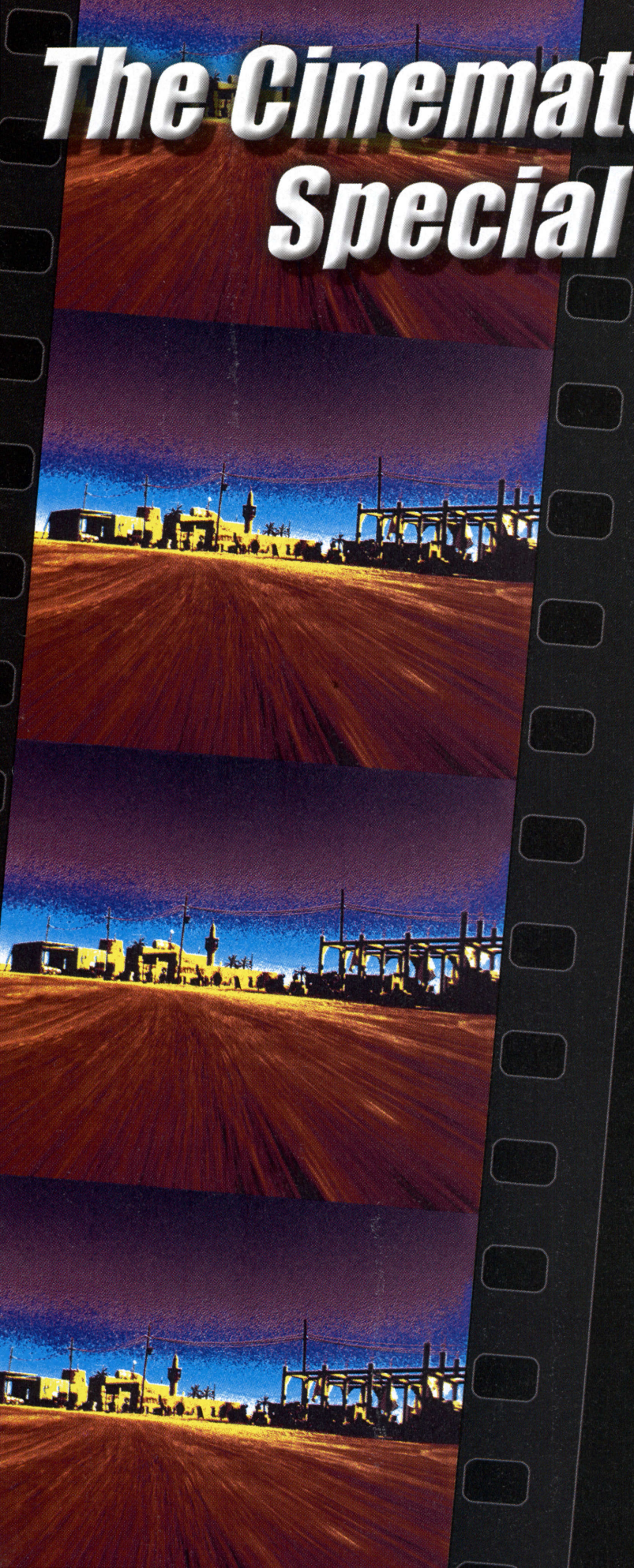

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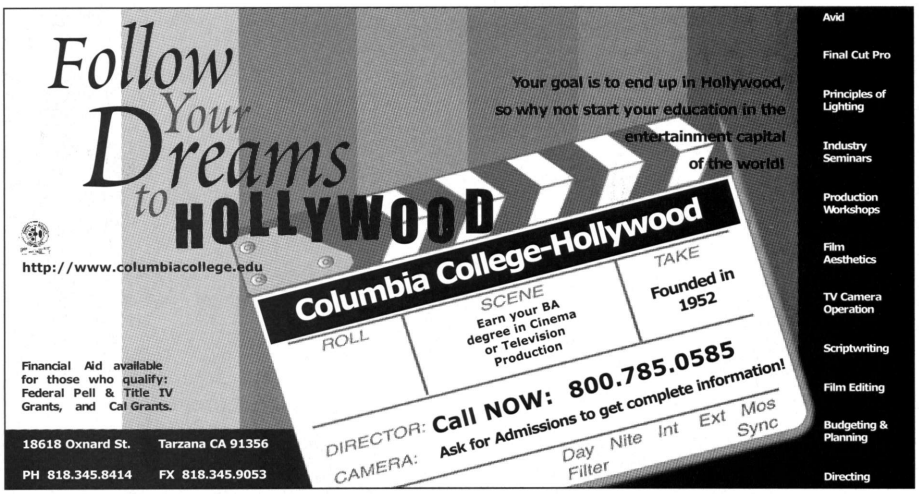

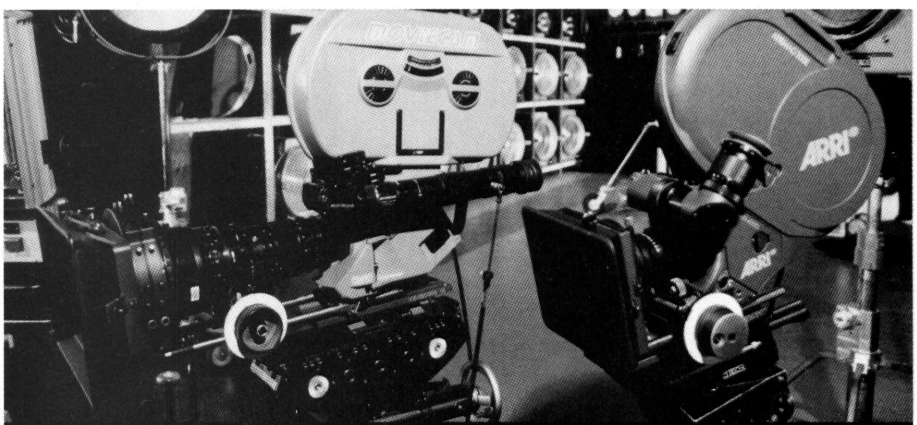

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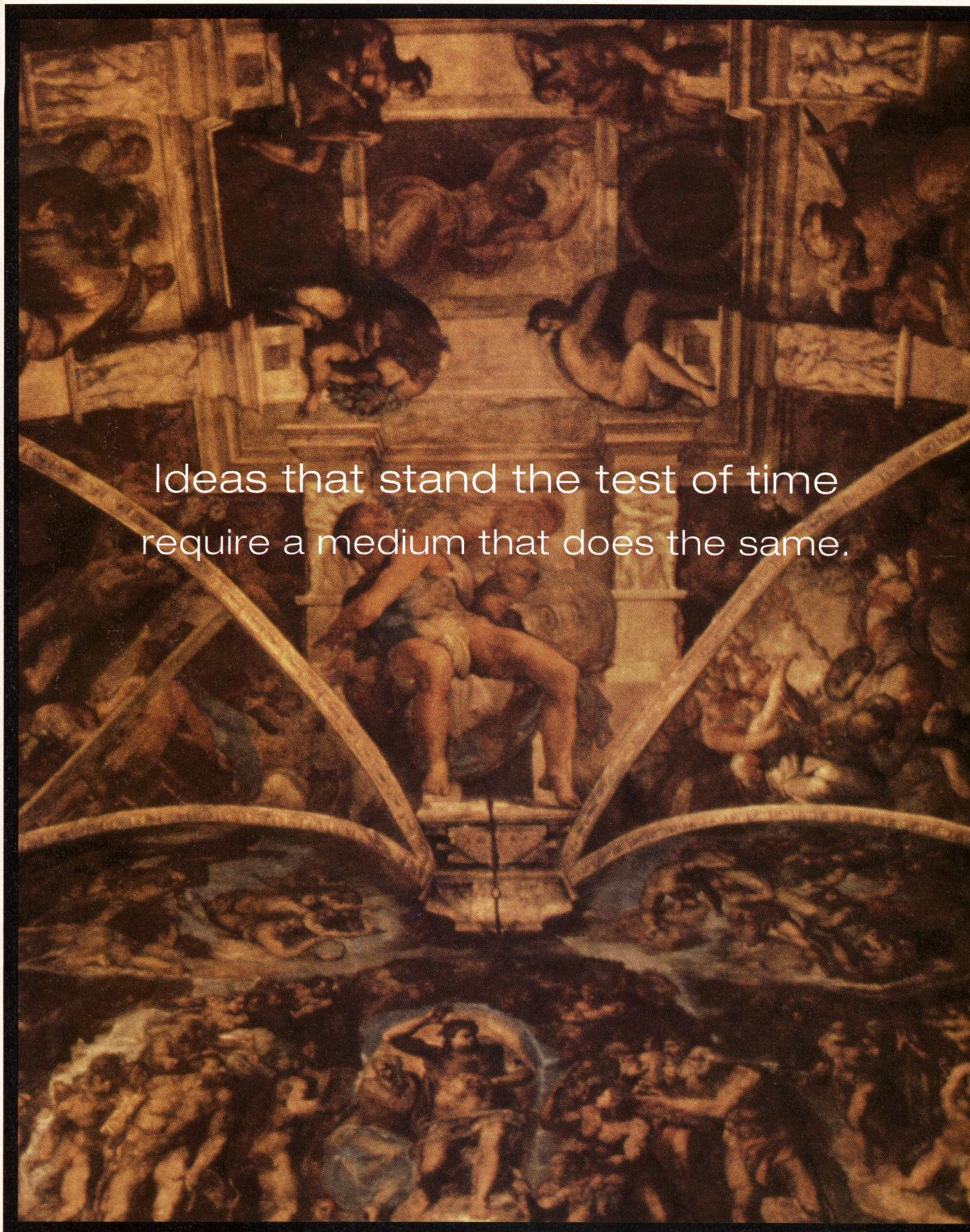

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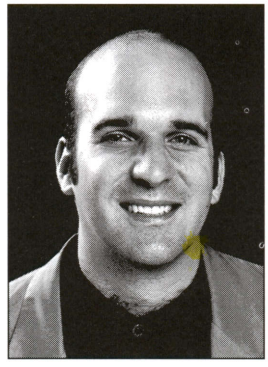

The theme of existential angst has fascinated many filmmakers, but directors Martin Scorsese and David Fincher have demonstrated a particularly keen grasp of this unsettling metaphysical condition, which can provoke claustrophobic feelings of anxiety, apprehension or insecurity. Scorsese has explored the motif throughout his career, but most comprehensively in *Taxi Driver*, *After Hours* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Fincher, for his part, suffused his first three feature films (*Alien*^{3}, *Seven* and *The Game*) with a brooding aura of psychological dread that effectively conveyed his characters' internal distress.

In their latest cinematic ventures, these uncompromising auteurs have once again sought to plumb the emotional depths for insights into the human condition. *Bringing Out the Dead* ("Urban Gothic," page 30) reteams Scorsese with ace cameraman Robert Richardson, ASC (*Casino*), whose accomplished photography lends a surreal edge to Paul Schrader's script about an emergency medical technician on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Fincher, meanwhile, has teamed with first-time feature cinematographer Jeff Cronenweth on *Fight Club* ("Anarchy in the U.S.A.," page 42), a provocative assault on social conformity in which a group of young, ennui-riddled men mount a bizarre revolt against a nationwide malaise that threatens to crush their souls. Both films promise to challenge even the most demanding viewer.

Equally intriguing is the teaming of independent-film veterans Steven Soderbergh and Edward Lachman, ASC, who bring their unique sensibilities to bear on *The Limey* ("Mad-Dog Englishman," page 54), a hard-nosed tale about an English hoodlum seeking vengeance in the States.

During their own initial collaboration on *The Ice Storm* (see *AC* October '97), director Ang Lee and cinematographer Frederick Elmes, ASC got along famously. This fruitful pairing has been renewed on *Ride With the Devil* ("A Not-So-Civil War," page 66), an earnest, picturesque exploration of the Civil War's impact on a group of Southern Bushwhackers.

This issue of *AC* also presents a roundup of the latest Emmy Award nominees for Best Cinematography ("Televised Gems," page 76), as well as an overview of the increasingly influential field of music videos and commercials ("Selling An Image," page 86). To further illustrate the art of the short form, we've also included a series of pieces highlighting some recent eye-catching clips.

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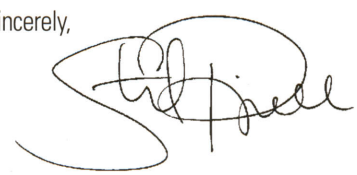

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ON FILM

DON PETERMAN, ASC

"My first film was *When a Stranger Calls.*
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I like improvising, but you can't make something out of nothing, so you need everyone on your side.
The director, cast and crew become your family on a film – it's like going to war together.
I try to choose scripts I can believe in. I think about what the movie is about, and find ways to help the director and actors tell that story.
I've shot a lot of successful movies, but the real thrill comes when I help tell a story with illusions that are so real no one realizes there is a camera."

Don Peterman, ASC earned Oscar®, nominations for *Flashdance* and *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home.*
His other credits include *Splash, Cocoon, American Flyers, Planes Trains and Automobiles, Addams Family Values, Point Break, Get Shorty, Men in Black* and *Mighty Joe Young.*
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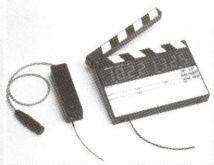

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The Post Process

SIGGRAPH '99: Poised for a Digital Millennium

by Debra Kaufman

Compared to the heady years of the late '80s and early '90s, Siggraph '99, the 26th annual International Conference on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques, was underwhelming. Many of the 42,690 people who wandered the aisles of the Los Angeles Convention Center from August 8-12, examining the wares of 337 exhibitors, complained that there was nothing new or exciting at a show known for explosive steps forward and exciting, unheard-of technologies.

To these naysayers, we say quit your bellyachin'. After all, it's possible that this seeming "lack of innovation" was simply the inevitable result of a maturing industry. What knocked your socks off in a conference concept paper 10 years ago is now a product that is real, affordable, user-friendly and already at work in Hollywood and elsewhere.

Rather than exciting new technologies, what was evident at Siggraph '99 was the development of trends. Most obvious is the fact that desktop technology has dramatically increased its dominance, causing some to worry about the future of Silicon Graphics, Inc., the computer-platform manufacturer that has made much of this revolution in digital imaging possible. SGI, which also produces an NT platform, used Siggraph to take a plunge into virtual reality, debuting plug-and-play solutions called Reality Center Desks.

While NT is gaining momentum as an operating system, Linux, a freeware equivalent, has also gained a signficant toehold in Unix-based houses. That popularity was evident at Siggraph '99, where Side Effects Software demonstrated Houdini 4.0 running Red Hat Linux 6.0 on a generic Intel-based workstation. Alias/Wavefront also announced its intention to create Red Hat Linux versions of its Maya Batch Renderer and Composer Renderer.

Motion capture or, as some prefer to call it, "performance animation," was also a star of the show. Motion Analysis, demonstrating ExpertVision's live real-time camera/character tracking, can now simultaneously capture actors and the position of a roving camera in areas up to 40' x 50'. Also on display was multiple-actor capture using up to 32 cameras in areas over 100' long. Meanwhile, Vicon introduced Vicon 8Rt, which produces accurate optical motion capture in real-time and renders live characters in Avid Softimage, Discreet 3-D Studio Max, Alias/Wavefront Maya and Kaydara FilmBox.

The trend of integrating 2-D and 3-D also bore more fruit with the announcement that Quantel and Alias/Wavefront have formed a technology partnership to further develop integration between their respective 2-D and 3-D toolsets. Quantel's Open Render Engine, which debuted at NAB '99, will provide the link between the two environments. With Maya on Quantel, expected to ship in December, the Maya application runs on the Open Render Engine under the direct control of the Quantel workstation.

One debut has piqued interest among those who produce and postproduce for the broadcast world. Boxx Technologies unveiled FusionBoxx HD, the first NT-based system for uncompressed HDTV editing and compositing. Fusion-

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Boxx HD features Eyeon Software's Digital Fusion HD, a bundled solution exclusive to Boxx.

The future "digital lab" was also in evidence at the show. In particular, Imagica Corporation and Arri announced that they are developing solutions for future digital lab applications. Imagica currently offers the Imager XE digital film scanner, which scans four seconds/frame at 2K resolution and 11 seconds/frame at 4K. The machine features pin-registered movement and proprietary film gate transport, and is designed to handle 35mm 4-perf and 35mm 8-perf, as well as 16mm and Super 16. Elsewhere, Arri now offers the Arrilaser, a cine film recorder that uses three solid state lasers as its light source, significantly reducing the cost of recording digital images onto film.

On the 3-D software front, Avid Technology unveiled the much-anticipated Sumatra, its next-generation 3-D nonlinear animation solution that boasts non-destructive animation mixing, interactive rendering and real-time surface continuity management. Nichimen Graphics showcased Mirai, a "3-D operating system" that features subdivision surface modeling, 2-D and 3-D paint, skeletal modeling, 3-D inverse kinematics, biomechanical motion editing, a nonlinear motion editing system, particles and physical simulation, and photorealistic rendering. Alias/Wavefront debuted Maya Paint Effects, a technology advancement that enables users to paint and animate complex organic and painterly detail into 3-D space.

One underlying theme in the evolution of computer graphics has been the advent of tools that don't require the operator to have a degree in computer science. Nowhere was that evolution demonstrated more aptly than at SensAble Technologies, where a 9-year-old child demonstrated FreeForm, a modeling system that uses physical metaphors such as sculpting and wire cutting, and is controlled directly and through touch. Of course, the young girl *was* the daughter of leading computer graphics artists Jeff Kleiser and Diana Walczak, but the company's point was made. ■

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Production Slate

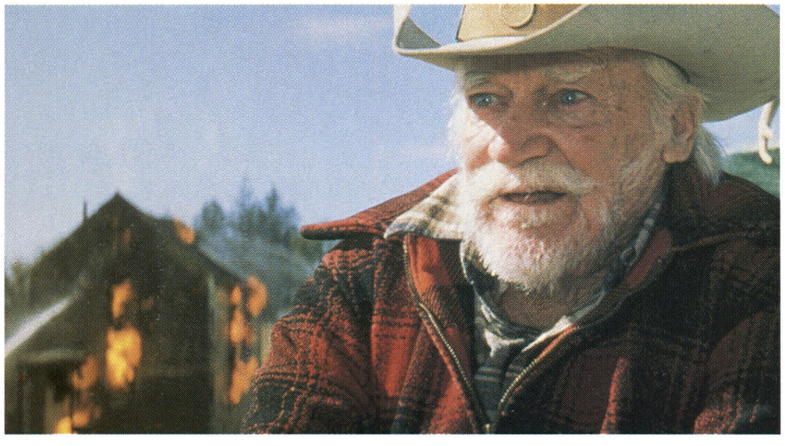
compiled by David E. Williams

Straight Shooting

by John Gainsborough

In 1994, Alvin Straight, a real-life resident of Laurens, Iowa, heard that his estranged brother had suffered a stroke. Formerly the best of friends, the two had quarreled acrimoniously and not spoken for a decade. Straight, over 70, in poor shape and recovering from a bad fall, was determined to reconcile with his sibling, who lived some 300 miles away in Mount Zion, Wisconsin. Unable to drive a car due to his poor eyesight, and too proud to be driven, Straight made his painstaking pilgrimage aboard a slow-moving riding lawnmower while towing a makeshift trailer. His successful journey took several weeks and was not without incident.

This slice of Americana caught the imagination of producer/writer/editor Mary Sweeney, who wrote a screenplay based on Straight's exploits and presented it to her longtime collaborator and partner, David Lynch. The tale immediately appealed to the always-off-the-beaten-path filmmaker, who soon approached venerable cinematographer Freddie Francis, BSC to shoot the unique road picture, entitled *The Straight Story.*



Alvin Straight (Richard Farnsworth) treks across the Midwest in *The Straight Story,* an unusual road picture directed by David Lynch and photographed by Freddie Francis, BSC. (Actual 35mm frames.)

The recipient of Academy Awards for his work on *Sons and Lovers* (1960) and *Glory* (1989), and the ASC International Award in 1998 (see *AC* Mar. '98), Francis had first collaborated with Lynch on *The Elephant Man* (1980), and subsequently shot Lynch's ambitious sci-fi epic *Dune* (*AC* Dec. '84). The two men have remained close friends ever since.

Francis received a call and the script for *The Straight Story* from Lynch in the summer of 1998, just six weeks before the start of principal photography. Eager to work with Lynch again, Francis didn't hesitate to accept the project, but he did stipulate a maximum 10-hour shooting day. A spry octogenarian, Francis asserts, "I'm not doing 16- or 17-hour days anymore, but even at 10 hours, we still came in two or three days under schedule on the six-week shoot. There must be a moral there somewhere!"

Francis also requested that his longtime camera operator, Gordon Hayman, be brought aboard the show. Hayman had operated on the last three days of *Elephant Man,* and has operated for Francis on every one of his pictures ever since.

Over the course of his 60 year's worth of experience in the film industry as both a cinematographer and director, Francis has found that creating the right mood in his photography is vital. "While talking to a director, it doesn't take me very long to understand the mood he is trying to get for his movie," the cameraman points out. "If he is the sort of person you want to work with, you can get into his mind. With David Lynch, I was on the same wavelength after a few

Photos by David Lynch. Photos and frame enlargements courtesy of Buena Vista Pictures.

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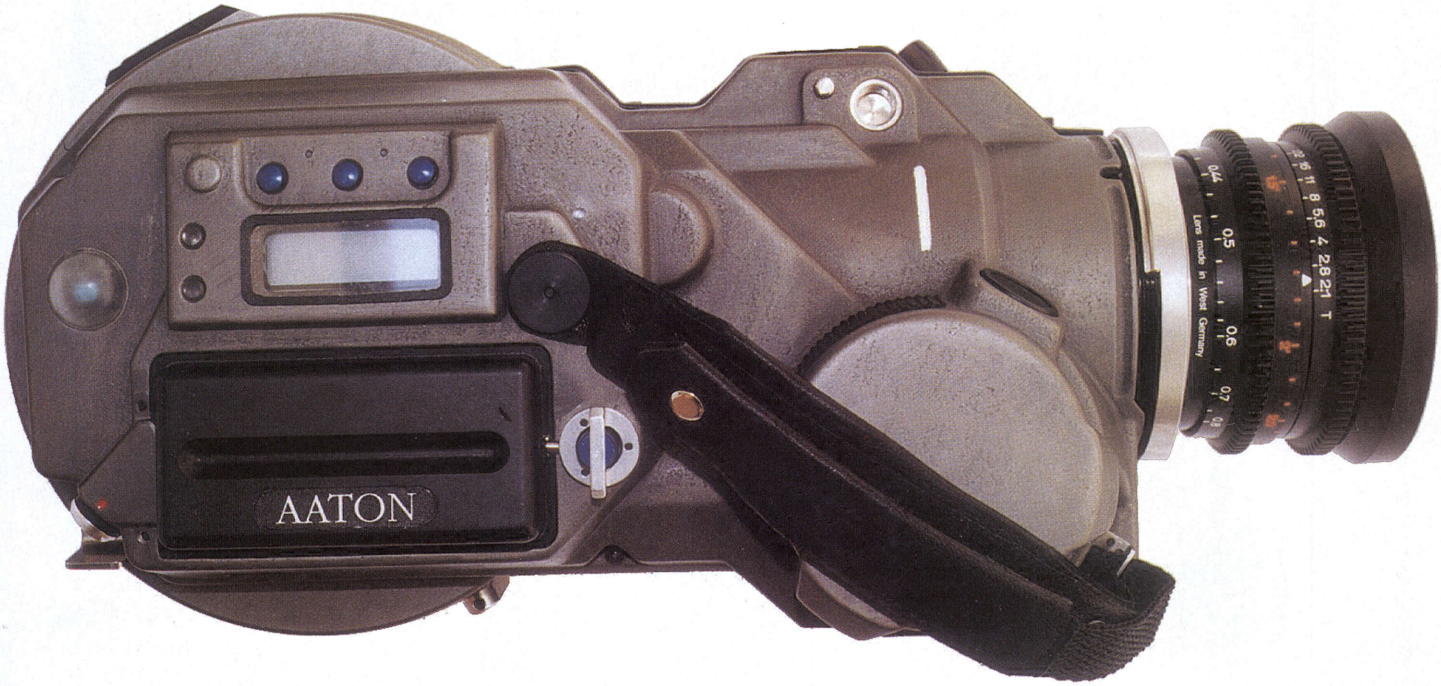

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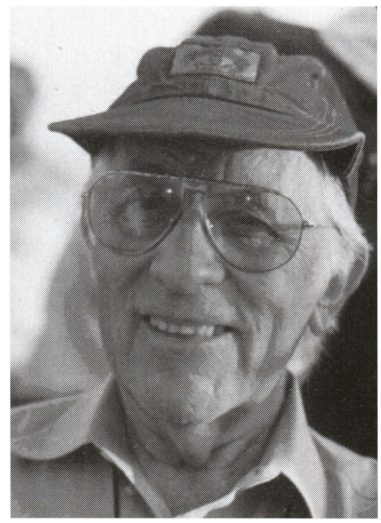

Above: Filming *The Straight Story* on location in Wisconsin. Freddie Francis (left) asked that shooting be restricted to 10-hour days, but the six-week shoot still came in under schedule.

minutes' talk, and for the rest of the movie we never discussed the photography."

Shooting began at the end of summer, with the landscape of Iowa stretching out before the filmmakers. Everything was to be done on location, and Lynch had already decided to shoot the picture in anamorphic. Simplicity and speed of operation were vital, and the only special effects would entail adding stars to a nighttime sky. "There was nothing 'George Lucas-y' at all," Francis says with a grin.

Francis employed Eastman Kodak Vision 200T 5274 for the majority of *Straight Story*, while he relied on Vision 500T 5279 for the film's night scenes. The equipment he utilized was straightforward: a Shotmaker camera car, a Panaflex GII with C-series anamorphic lenses, a "normal" array of lighting gear, and one essential piece of equipment that the cameraman has used extensively: an Arriflex Varicon.

Francis had the Varicon (short for Variable Contrast) on the front of his camera at all times. However, the cinematographer admits that he is probably one of the very few people to use one. Originally developed as the "Colorflex" by British cameraman Gerry Turpin, BSC (see *AC* Jan. '73), the device was adopted by Arriflex, re-engineered and renamed the Varicon. It consists of a matte box with a clear glass plate placed in front of the lens, which can be illuminated from the sides (in controllable increments) to reduce contrast in the scene or add color tints.

Francis first used a Varicon on *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in 1981, and found that it had the secondary effect of slightly softening focus. "One trouble [for cinematographers] these days is that I think all of the newer lenses are almost *too* good," Francis contends. "I therefore try to knock some of the definition off them, [and the Varicon helps in that regard]."

Acutely conscious of the importance of time on the tight *Straight Story* schedule, Francis used as few takes as possible. Though he and Hayman made full use of their Shotmaker truck, he kept camera

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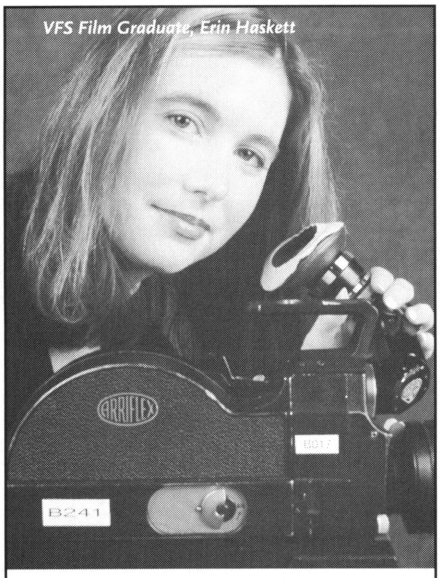

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movement to a minimum. "If David wants camera movement, he wants *good* camera movement — not just, 'Oh, move the camera from here to there,'" Francis explains. "That takes time. I concentrate on doing the job as quickly as possible, because the less time I spend, the more time the director has. That, to my mind, is very important. I find that the Varicon speeds things up even more."

Hayman chose the truck-mounted Shotmaker crane, with its very flexible configuration, specifically to enable him to get a wide range of shots quickly and easily. He says that "it was one of the most important pieces of equipment in our kit." Francis and Hayman made subtle use of the crane throughout the picture to emphasize Straight's excruciatingly slow progress. At one point early in the movie, they achieve a highly successful visual joke simply by exploiting the gentle rise and fall of the camera on the crane. The shot begins near road level, tightly framing the back end of Straight's mower as it travels along. The camera then rises suddenly to reveal a panoramic view of the highway stretching into the distance. After a long pause, the camera lowers back to its original composition, to find that the intrepid Straight's slow-but-steady headway can be measured in mere yards.

Francis strove to capture authentic Midwest ambiance and mood for *The Straight Story*. "We lapped up the atmosphere of Iowa and tried to put that on the screen to accentuate the plight of the old boy and his daughter, and to convey the poverty they were in," he notes. "The film then opened out once he took to the road. If you've ever been to Iowa and seen the fields of corn, they look pretty much the same. The place has a certain quality, but it's very flat with straight roads that go on forever." This feeling is well-represented in the picture by broad, swooping shots (made by aerial coordinator Bobby Zajonc and the second-unit crew) that establish the majestic scale and autumnal colors of the landscape.

Francis used a natural approach in his lighting. "When I was a kid starting out in the business," he reflects, "I became all too aware that on a good picture, the photography was always first-class but rarely had anything to do with the story. It was always brilliant and glossy regardless of the subject matter. If I've done nothing else in my career, I've really registered that point." Indeed, in *The Straight Story,* understatement serves to accentuate the clarity of the film's script and acting. Low-key interiors of bars reminiscent of Hopper paintings, as well as dramatic contrasts of weather and landscape, are injected only at essential points in the story.

The accuracy of a given location is of special importance to Francis. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* was shot in Weymouth using the precise places described in the book, and the battle scenes in *Glory* were shot on the actual historical sites when possible. As Alvin Straight grinds his way across Iowa, over the Mississippi River, and into Wisconsin, Francis exploits the cinema verité qualities of the seemingly endless, flat topography. Francis came to Middle America as an outside observer with an objective view, but as the film progressed he was drawn into the story. "I suppose the great thing is, when I get on this sort of film, in a strange way I become one of the actors."

Francis notes that the progression of the seasons helped to reinforce the passage of time in the story. The tale begins in high summer as a woman sunbathes adjacent to Straight's house, but as autumn advances, the cornfields becomes "crackly and ripe," with harvesters working the fields in the background.

The cameraman testifies that the locations, and the Iowans themselves, made an enormous contribution to *The Straight Story*. "One of the great things about the movie, which surprised me, was that we had so many local actors who were absolutely wonderful," Francis commends. "The small parts, vignettes really, were nearly all taken by local artists, who were invariably brilliant. We shot in their home environments, which must have made it easier for them. We even shot in the real home of Alvin Straight, which was very small for a set,

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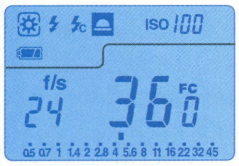

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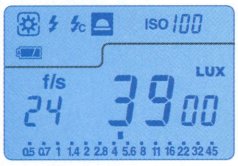

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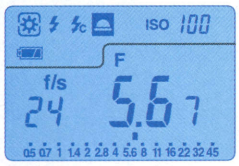

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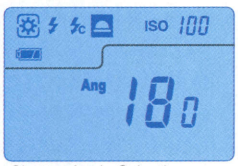

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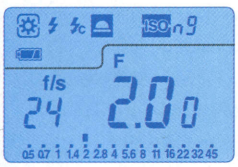

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A hostile home serves as the arena for *The War Zone*, directed by Tim Roth and photographed by Seamus McGarvey, BSC. Top: Tom (Freddie Cunliffe) confronts his brutal father (Ray Winstone). Bottom: Jessie (Lara Belmont) explores the cement bunker near her home.

Photos by Jaap Buitendijk, courtesy of Lot 47, Inc. and mPRm Public Relations.

but redolent with atmosphere."

Francis says he was particularly impressed by a long, minimally-lit scene between Straight (Richard Farnsworth) and another old man (Leroy Swalley) in a bar, where the duo share anguished wartime memories. "The actors simply sat in a bar having a long talk," he reflects. "You may think, 'These two old boys can never hold this scene,' but they *do*. It is just that they are so alive — two old faces with young eyes.

"Richard [Farnsworth] has this wonderful old face with very young, deep blue eyes; they absolutely shone out. I never did anything too special, except to make sure that the audience would always see the actors' eyes. That is so important. Whatever your mood of lighting for a scene, it should change when you come to faces. There were a lot of close-ups of Sissy Spacek [as Straight's daughter, Rose] in the movie. She is very downtrodden, and you get that sense entirely from her eyes. I just hope the average cinema-goer appreciates that sort of thing."

Francis's one and only criticism of the production was the poor quality of the facilities used to screen dailies. Because of this drawback, the filmmakers only watched film rushes on the first day of the shoot. "I usually say, quite big-headedly, that I think I know what my photography is going to look like when I shoot it," the cameraman muses. "If there is anything technically wrong with the footage, the lab will soon let us know."

Reared during the "no-frills," pre-reflex-viewfinding era of cinema, Francis is not one to jump at the latest technical conveniences. "After our experience with the first day's rushes, we just got video dailies," he observes. "But since I think it is better not to see anything at all than to see dailies on video, I didn't view any more material during the shoot." Additionally, the filmmakers elected not to use a video assist.

The cinematographer delegates responsibility with absolute trust to Hayman, and reserves additional praise for the talents his key grip, Don Cerrone, dolly grip, Mike Fedak, and focus puller, Bill McConnell, brought to the production. McConnell would pass on any important comment from the labs, but Francis notes that "unless disaster strikes, I keep out of my crew's way."

Fond of saying that "there are three kinds of photography: good photography, bad photography and the right photography," Francis believes he found the right photography for this heartfelt story. "If people want to see a charming film, and I sincerely hope they do, this is the one for them."

A Fractured Family

by Duncan Petrie

One of the most recent newcomers to the British Society of Cinematographers is Seamus McGarvey. At age 32, he is not only the youngest-ever member of the BSC — and the only Irishman — but has already earned a reputation for both innovative and versatile camerawork.

McGarvey's latest film to be released in the U.S. is actor Tim Roth's directorial debut, *The War Zone*, a powerful and claustrophobic tale of incest set in a remote and bleak part of the English countryside. Adapted by Alexander Stuart from his own 1989 novel, *The War Zone* is a courageous and sensitive study of a dysfunctional family, and the trauma that afflicts the 15-year-old son when he discovers that his father is sexually abusing his older sister. The cast includes veteran thespians Ray Winstone (*Nil By Mouth*) and Tilda Swinton (*Orlando*) as the parents, while newcomers Freddie Cunliffe and Lara Belmont play Tom and Jessie, the siblings at the heart of the drama. The subtlety of the performances, as well as skillful direction by Roth, gives the film an integrity and sophistication appropriate to the difficulty of the subject matter. Equally impactful are the film's strong visuals, which maintain a delicate balance of atmosphere and charged emotion.

McGarvey's creative bent was initially stimulated by still photography. "Stills work gave me a good grounding in photographic chemistry and the ability to compose a frame," he says. McGarvey

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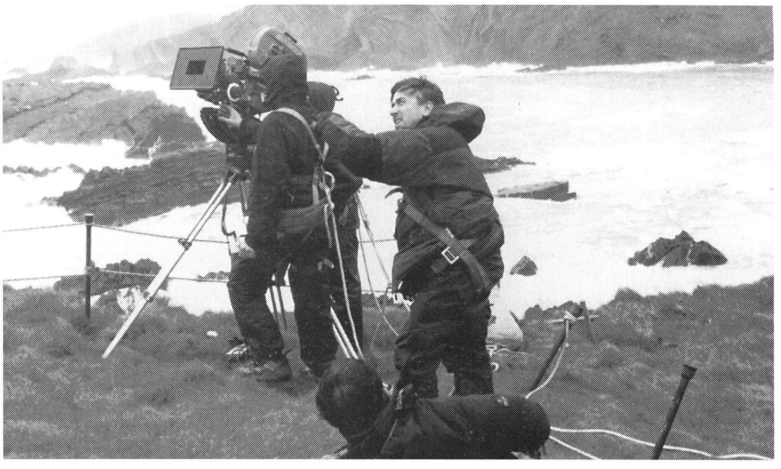

Director Roth (center) helps to set a shot while location in north Devon, where the constant wind played havoc with the production.

studied at the Polytechnic of Central London from 1985-'88, where he continued to work mainly in still photography. His interests changed, however, after Polish cinematographer Jacek Petrycki took McGarvey under his wing and encouraged the young man's developing interest in moving images.

This later led to a meeting with Irish director/cameraman Thaddeus O'Sullivan, who hired McGarvey as a camera trainee on his feature film *December Bride*, photographed by Bruno de Keyser. For the next few years, McGarvey cut his teeth on a variety of assignments, working as a loader on such features as *Map of the Human Heart* and *Dakota Road*. The latter was photographed by Ian Wilson, BSC, who became another important figure in McGarvey's professional life. "Ian has a very unselfish way of imparting knowledge and experience," McGarvey attests. "To this day, I still phone him whenever I'm in a technical fix."

In addition to his feature work, McGarvey shot numerous low- and no-budget short films, many on Super 8. As his reputation grew, he found himself in hot demand in this arena, particularly among first-time filmmakers. McGarvey continues to value the opportunity to work on shorts, noting that "they provide an chance to work with really good filmmakers with a knowledge of cinema. Shorts are like little vignettes that allow you to create a more defined photographic world. The imaginations of the directors are still free."

McGarvey has also gained experience on over 100 music videos, shooting clips for such artists as Sinead O'Connor, P.J. Harvey, Suede, Paul McCartney, Texas, and Natalie Imbruglia.

After photographing his first feature-length drama, *Look Me in the Eye*, in 1995, McGarvey's career took off. He has worked with both established directors (such as Mike Figgis and Michael Winterbottom), and several newcomers (including actor Alan Rickman on *The Winter Guest;* see *AC* Dec. '97). McGarvey's own explanation for his success is characteristically modest: "Because of my youth, the directors don't feel so intimidated." He has since shot a series of challenging feature assignments, including *Butterfly Kiss, The Slab Boys, Jump the Gun, A Map of the World, I Could Read the Sky* and *The Big Tease*. When interviewed for this story, he had just finished shooting *High Fidelity* in Chicago for Stephen Frears.

In tackling any new script, McGarvey stresses the importance of finding the photographic heart of the story, and facilitating an approach that's in tune with the subject matter. Assessing *The War Zone,* McGarvey cites a wide range of influences, including the epic stillness of the films of Carl Dreyer, the immediacy of Pier Paolo Pasolini's work, the graphic qualities of Kieslowski's *A Short Film About Killing,*

the low-key cinematography of Néstor Almendros, ASC and Chris Menges, BSC, and the still photography of Nan Goldin and Larry Clarke.

McGarvey also stresses the importance of the collaboration between a cinematographer and director, noting that he was impressed by Roth's knowledge of the filmmaking process: "Tim has a surprisingly strong technical facility — he knew about lenses, cutting, and even laboratory work." The duo agreed that the film should be shot in anamorphic. McGarvey explains, "We wanted to lend the landscape an epic quality, to look at people within a landscape, and [to convey] the weight of the land and sky, [and a sense of] isolation and remoteness. The interiors were shot in a real farmhouse, and we were also interested in domestic landscapes. The anamorphic frame allowed us to examine the interdynamics of the family relationships; we could film the entire family unit within the same frame using long takes that would last two to three minutes."

This non-obtrusive, detached style invites the audience to share young Tom's sense of confusion and unease. It also allowed the complexities of the emotions between the characters to play out in series of furtive looks and glances fraught with manipulative cruelty manipulation and naïve misunderstanding.

McGarvey's lighting design clearly conveys the inability of light to penetrate the murky darkness that literally and metaphorically engulfs the characters, even during the daytime. For the interiors, production designer Michael Carlin created an appropriately subdued tonal range devoid of any primary colors. The exteriors are even bleaker — the rocky coastal landscape is practically monochrome in many sequences. The scarred, war-era cement bunker where Tom witnesses his father abusing Jessie looks as if it has been hewn from the same rock as the cliffs. The opening shot of the landscape is from inside the bunker, an image replete with foreboding and secrecy; it is to this very space that Tom retreats during the film's climactic moments.

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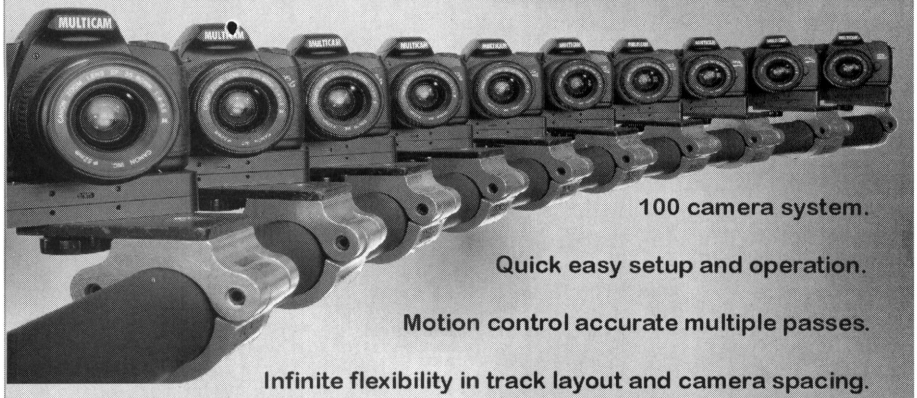

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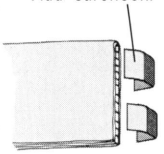

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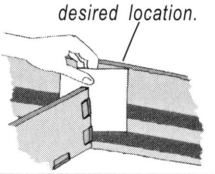

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Given the rigors of shooting in winter in a remote and windswept part of the country, McGarvey was happy to be working with his regular crew: "In particular, I needed the backup of my gaffer, Lee Walters, with whom I've been working for a long time. Lee is unflappable under pressure, and maintains a sense of humor." McGarvey also relied heavily on focus puller Baz Irvine. "I knew I would need his skill, since we were working fast in low-light conditions with anamorphic lenses and their shallower depth of field. Baz has an intuitive sense of focus, and as a result, the film is perfectly sharp." Another colleague he singles out for praise is grip Stuart Bunting: "Tim would improvise scenes in rehearsal, and we had to improvise moves around the actors in rehearsal. Stuart's exact sense of timing was crucial."

McGarvey's main camera was a Panavision Platinum, complemented by a Moviecam Compact for Steadicam work. Roth had planned to incorporate a great deal of Steadicam movement into the film, but in the end it was used much more sparingly and effectively, particularly at the beginning and end of the film. The opening shots of Tom cycling along were done with the Steadicam attached to a garfield mount on a quad bike. The resulting sequence creates a sense of freedom and dynamism that is crushed when the boy returns to the cloying atmosphere of the cottage. The final two shots in the film are also very powerful. The first, a Steadicam shot, pulls away from Tom and Jessie in the bunker. As Tom closes the door in the audience's face, the filmmakers cut to a Wescam-stabilized helicopter shot which slowly pulls back from the structure, shrinking it to an insignificant spot in the unforgiving landscape.

The Steadicam was used to great emotional effects in other sequences as well. In one key scene, Tom peers through a window to see his father taking a bath with his sister. Denied the boy's POV, the audience instead must endure the mixture of horror and fascination apparent in his face. As Tom

recoils from the window, the camera pulls back from him, conveying a palpable sense of his repulsion. This shot is immediately followed by an interior sequence in which Tom's emotional point of view is expressed by way of a slow and deliberate move, which ends with the camera burrowing into the back of his father's head. McGarvey suggests that this shot has a predatory quality, with the audience sharing what is clearly a rush of hatred toward Tom's father. Achieving the shot was particularly difficult for both Steadicam operator Alistair Rae and focus puller Baz Irvine, given the shallow depth of field that was available and the restricted space in the cottage.

McGarvey maintains that he relished the challenge of lighting within the constraints of a real farmhouse location with low ceilings and limited space. "I love working from real sources, or approximating where a source would actually come from," he explains. "For daytime interiors, I tried to light predominantly from the outside with daylight-balanced 4K and 6K HMI sources, either directly through frames or bounced for a softer effect. For fill, I used small Kino Flo lights and mixed the color temperatures — half daylight and half tungsten. I was also keen to work with existing sources to create a sense of ambient lighting within the farmhouse, so there are usually several practicals right in the shot."

Because of the excessive wind on the location in north Devon, it was impossible to use using normal ND gel material on the windows, so McGarvey had acrylic ND sheets made up and screw-mounted directly onto the window frames. The dark nighttime interiors presented their own challenges. "We wanted to create a sepulchral world in the interior, a bold chiaroscuro in which the light falls off rapidly into darkness," the cameraman relates. "In such scenes, you are lighting *with* darkness, so I used 150-watt peppers and smaller Kino Flo sources to provide just enough illumination for the desired effect. Warmer ambience was created with Chinese lanterns on dimmers set at 50

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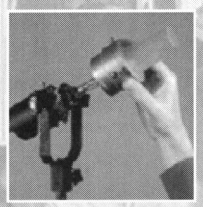
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percent." Kino Flos were also used in the kitchen, providing the impression of a soft downlight and allowing the actors greater freedom in the confined space. In the bunker, a spotlight effect was created by a 4K toplight pumped through a 3' x 3' aperture in the top of the construction, helping to imbue the space with an almost ritualistic ambience.

With the help of Hugh Whittaker at Panavision, McGarvey adopted a set of Crystal Express lenses previously used by Chris Menges on *The Mission*. "They are adapted from old Cooke lenses, and have an incredible quality," McGarvey attests. "We used them without any diffusion, and they had the advantage of providing a bit more depth of field." The cameraman worked almost exclusively with standard primes for interiors, particularly the 50mm and 100mm, but used longer lenses for exteriors. A rain deflector was also required because of the constant drizzle and spray.

Only two film stocks were used on *The War Zone:* Kodak's Vision 500T 5279 for the day and night interiors, and Vision 5274 200T for the exteriors. This selectivity was a blessing for loader Dave Matches and trainee Lyn Gaskin. "Knowing the requirements of the lenses and the low-light environments, T4 was as low as I could go," McGarvey says. "I love shooting on Kodak film because of its consistence and clarity."

Film processing was handled by Technicolor, and McGarvey was thrilled with the service he received: "They did a fantastic job. The timing of the dailies was impeccable throughout, and I had daily contact with the lab. What was wonderful about the production, in spite of current trends and our lower budget, was that we were able to have film dailies every night. This became an amazing point of bonding and cohesion during the shoot, particularly given the isolating and lonely spot we were in. After a hard day's work in the freezing wind, sitting and watching the previous day's rushes really knitted us together as a crew and gave everyone a common sense of purpose. That type of experience is very unusual today with the widespread use of electronic editing; as a result, people can sometimes feel very dislocated from a project."

The film's harsh location and subject matter left an indelible impression on those involved in the project. McGarvey is particularly proud of the results, and he gives director Roth high marks for his achievement. "In order to reach that state of emotion with the actors, you have get into highly emotional states. In the editing, these things are refined and you are left with a fine-tuned version. The spiky, bare dailies were often excruciatingly painful to watch, but during the editing process with Trevor Waite, Tim shaped the footage into something that has real integrity." ■

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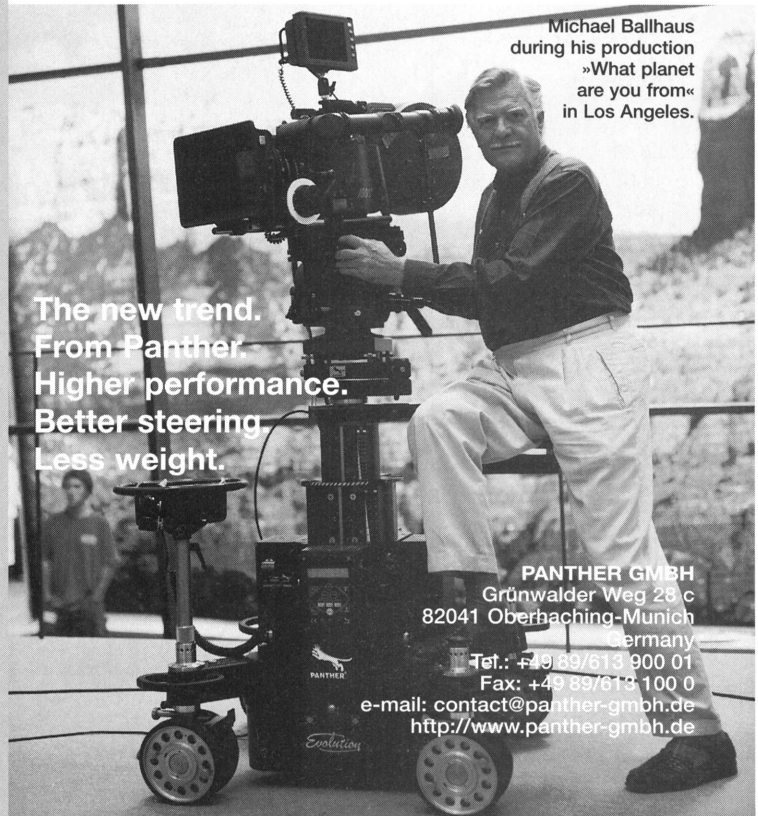

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Urban Gothic

Cinematographer Robert Richardson, ASC rejoins director Martin Scorsese for a harrowing look at the life of a troubled EMT in *Bringing Out the Dead.*

by Eric Rudolph

Unit photography by Phil Caruso

The streets are strewn with trash and the night is punctuated by squealing sirens, gunshots and random trash-barrel fires. Bedraggled drug addicts, underaged prostitutes and raving lunatics wander about in a somnambulant daze. Violence, obscenity, insanity and graffiti are everywhere, and to the city's ambulance crews, it always seems to be just a few hours before dawn, with the life of another self-destructive person hanging in the balance.

Welcome to the world of Martin Scorsese's *Bringing Out the Dead,* which presents a nasty vision of New York near the beginning of the 1990s, before the city was transformed from an X-rated cesspool into a more PG metropolis. This gritty film documents a few harrowing days in the life of an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) amid the after-hours insanity of Manhattan's Hell's Kitchen, where the area's few upstanding citizens seem horribly outnumbered.

Based on the novel by former EMT Joe Connelly, the picture tells the story of the spiritually shattered Frank Pierce (Nicolas Cage), whose utter dedication to his life's calling has sent him into a state of near-catatonia. He loves the high he gets from saving people nobody else wants to touch, but like all highs, this one never lasts; on those rare occasions when his help just isn't enough, losing a patient rocks Pierce to the core of his soul.

When his regular, reasonably stable partner, Larry (John Goodman) calls in sick, Pierce is forced to work with two other men (Ving Rhames and Tom Sizemore) whose eccentricities and terrifying recklessness hasten his disintegration. Pierce clings to a glimpse of a brighter future in his hopes of connecting with Mary Burke (Patricia Arquette), the daughter of a man whose life he attempts to preserve.

Scorsese worked from a script by director/screenwriter Paul Schrader, with whom he had previously collaborated on *Taxi Driver, Raging Bull* and *The Last Temptation of Christ.* Because *Bringing Out the Dead* focuses on disconnected people who drive around Manhattan at night, Scorsese knew that comparisons to the classic *Taxi Driver* were inevitable. "We wanted to do New

Photos courtesy of Paramount Pictures and Touchstone Pictures.

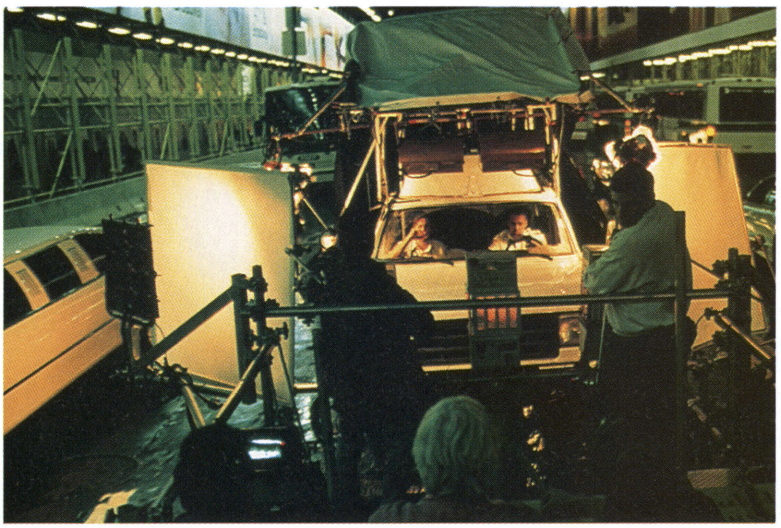
York at night in a way that would create a claustrophobic feeling, and I was aware that it would seem as if I'd already done that," he concedes.

In the hope of countering this perception, Scorsese took a different approach to his latest picture, immersing himself in the night world of EMTs. The filmmaker rode in ambulances for several nights, an experience that had a strong, direct influence on the film's hallucinatory look. "When you take an ambulance call in the middle of the night, the siren goes on, lights flash and pop music blares," the director relates. "As you speed down the streets, you start to imagine that you're seeing things in the blur of your peripheral vision. I was only out on the streets for a few nights, so I can imagine what that must be like for someone who has been on the job for years."

These wild visual kaleidoscopes inspired Scorsese to lead the audience into Pierce's tortured mindset by "showing the things Frank might have thought he'd seen — the streaks, shadows and flashes of light."

Cinematographer Robert Richardson, ASC was a good match for the material. "Capturing the hallucinatory quality of these visions, and how they shape Frank Pierce's experiences, seemed like a perfect job for Bob," Scorsese submits. "I also liked the work he'd done for me on *Casino* (see *AC* November 1995), especially the different layers of light he used. We'd gotten along and collaborated well."

Completed over several months of rigorous nighttime filming on the streets of New York, *Bringing Out the Dead* employed a mix of real locations and sets built by production designer Dante Ferretti. Occasionally, these real and faux settings were blended together. For example, an interior set of a hospital emergency room was built inside a large open space at New York's famous Bellevue Hospital so that shots could start outside, at an unused ambulance dock, and continue uninterrupted into the intensely chaotic inner area.



When Ferretti and Scorsese visited the finished hospital set, the illusion fooled the director completely. Ferretti recalls, "Martin touched a wall in the emergency room and said, 'Dante, this is fake!' I had to remind him that it was a set we had built!"

Some of the film's other key scenes take place in a studio set depicting a high-rise drug lair that is garishly decorated and dramatically lit. When asked about the simultaneously wild and moody look of these scenes, Richardson proclaims, "Chalk that up to Dante Ferretti. He chose

Opposite: EMT Frank Pierce (Nicolas Cage) faces off with his reckless fill-in partner Tom Walls (Tom Sizemore). This page: In lighting the EMS ambulance for nighttime process work, cameraman Robert Richardson employed numerous sources to illuminate the cab from the outside rather than using any internal fixtures. Dolly tracks mounted on the trailer allowed precise camera moves around the vehicle while it was in motion, although bumpy streets hampered the filmmakers' efforts.

Urban Gothic

Director Martin Scorsese checks the frame while Richardson does some stand-in work. The filmmakers previously collaborated on the 1995 crime film *Casino*, and Scorsese felt Richardson's talents would well-suited to the hallucinatory world of *Bringing Out the Dead*.

the colors with Marty; I just put the lights in there. Dante is brilliant. The production designer works on the film for months upon months, much longer than the cinematographer. Good work that people think is the cinematographer's is often that of the production designer. We light their sets, and when their work is beautifully accomplished — by which I mean well matched to the story — the end result is vastly superior."

Ferretti confesses that he was initially at a loss in terms of finding the key to the look of *Bringing Out the Dead*. "Martin is from New York, and I am from Italy, so I had to try to get into his head," he admits.

Ferretti normally starts his creative process by reviewing paintings. "When painters make a piece of life on a canvas, they take out all the non-essential elements," he observes. "Seeing only the essentials helps me focus when I'm trying to devise a look for a new project."

In the case of gritty, urban *Bringing Out the Dead,* however, paintings did not seem to be the right place to start, so Ferretti immersed himself in still photography books about urban dwellers on the fringes of society. One title that Scorsese cites as influential was photojournalist Eugene Richard's 1995 book *The Knife and Gun Club: Scenes From an Emergency Room*, which features black-and-white stills taken in a Denver trauma unit and on ambulance runs.

Ferretti also examined photos of underground tunnels where homeless people lived, and even visited several of them. "Those places are like another entire city," he marvels. "They are unbelievable, and they are like hell." Details from such real-life visits are sprinkled throughout the film. Ferretti elaborates, "Details are the most important thing to me in designing a film — things like how homeless people arrange their belongings, how the trash looks on a tough New York street at four in the morning, how different types of graffiti appear in one part of town and not another."

This early photographic research contributed to the monochromatic, desaturated look that Scorsese and Richardson eventually adopted. "Most of the photographs I looked at were in black-and-white, so that is how I began perceiving the look of the film, even though it was to be in color," Ferretti says.

Scorsese confirms, "I wanted the film to be less colorful, and Bob suggested skip-bleaching." This process involves an either partial or total elimination of the bleach step in printing, which results in the retention of more silver in the image, creating desaturated colors and deeper blacks (see "Soup du Jour," *AC* Nov. '98). "Bob showed me his upcoming film, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, in which the skip-bleach process was used effectively, and I said, 'Let's do it!'" Scorsese enthuses. "My ideal of desaturated color is the control they got with the Technicolor [prints] of *Moby Dick*, a look that was designed by director John Huston and cinematographer Oswald Morris [BSC] in 1956. However, the skip-bleaching gave *Bringing Out the Dead* another flavor and tone that I also like."

This tone is especially apparent in some of the film's driving scenes. While light motivated from road signs was occasionally played on the actors, Richardson tried to de-emphasize the signs' warm effect in shots of the streets. "Part of the point of the bleach-bypass was to overwhelm the red and yellow tones, which tend to predominate from signs in Manhattan at night," the cinematographer says. "We were trying to move the whole film to a cooler black-and-white feel."

Bringing Out the Dead was shot in the anamorphic (2.35:1) format with Panavision's older C- and E-series anamorphic lenses (although Richardson did utilize Panavision's Super High-Speed T1.4 35mm anamorphic lens for many of the film's ambulance-mounted shots). Richardson debunks the idea that a widescreen film shot on the street at night might be better accomplished in spherical Super 35. "Unless a zoom lens is critical to the film," he avows, "there isn't that great a difference between the speeds of spherical and anamorphic prime lenses, and I happen to like the look of an anamorphic lens wide open at T2; some people may not. My first assistant, Gregor Tavenner, is extraordinarily capable at maintaining focus at such apertures. As it was, we used no zooms, except for one shot where Marty wanted a snap pullout from the front of the ambulance."

The older lenses were tapped because they helped avoid an excess of contrast, and because the cinematographer is comfortable with them. "I'm accustomed to the C and E lenses," he says. "I felt it was especially important to stick with those older lenses on this film. There's a high level of contrast with the Primos, and given the deep blacks of the bleach-bypass printing, and the fact that the new Kodak print stocks are higher in contrast, we would have picked up enough contrast to bury the dead!"

To scale back some of the extra contrast created by the bleach-bypass process, Richardson used a ⅛ to ¼ black ProMist filter throughout the production.

One of the crew's biggest challenges on the show was preparing practical locations. In addition to following Pierce and his partners as they delivered people to the emergency room, Scorsese wanted to be able to show the medics racing into apartments from the street. Scenes set in the Burke apartment were therefore filmed in a real, occupied tenement apartment which the crew took over for a month. Six walls were actually removed in this apartment so the filmmakers would have more room. "It was a mess," Ferretti laments. "We had to put everything back because people lived there and were coming back after spending a month in a hotel."

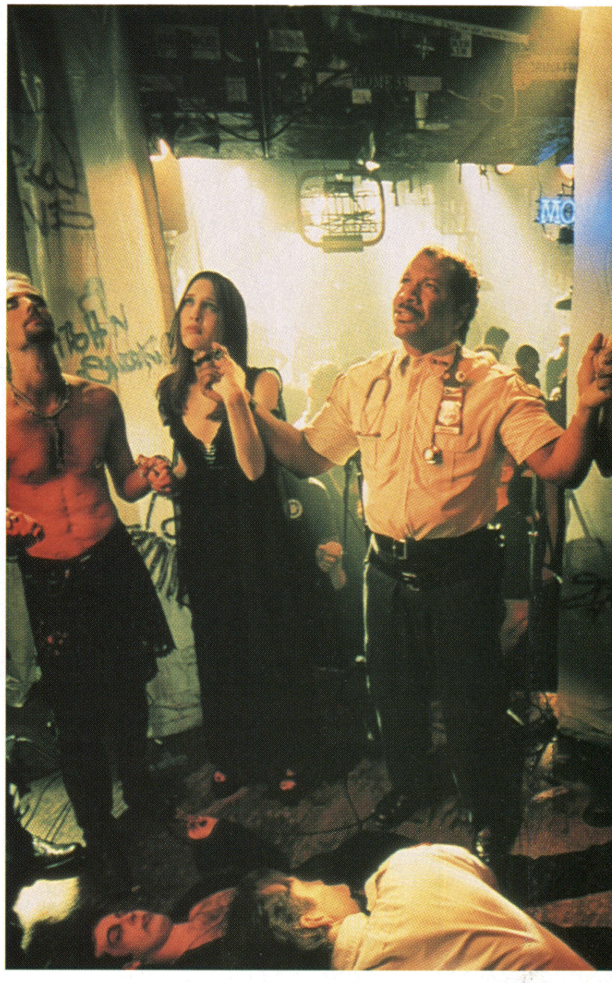
Richardson details, "The camera was always coming in through a door, entering, exiting and moving up stairs and down and out to the street. However, when it came to the scenes between Patricia and Nic, Martin kept things more static. Throughout the rest of the film, which moves very rapidly, we were constantly following people speeding through the city, so it made a certain amount of sense to stop moving when we weren't in the ambulance."

The composition and movement of virtually every shot was predetermined by Scorsese. "Marty tends to pre-design more than 90 percent of his shots," Richardson explains. "Of course, there is some flexibility in those pre-designed shots, depending on what the location can or cannot provide. He may alter his preconception if he feels it is just not worth the time to stick to the storyboard. However, once he believes that something needs to be done a certain way, it will be done that way — no matter what it takes."

Richardson adds that there are always a small number of shots that have not been storyboarded, but he maintains, "It's not like I come along and say, 'Let's do this or that.' The shots that are not down on paper are defined by Marty once he arrives on set. There's not a great deal of interaction with the cinematographer on what a shot may or may not do; there may be some small adjustments, but I emphasize the word 'small.'"

Scorsese notes, however, that he left the actual job of photographing the streets from ambulance-mounted cameras to Richardson. "I would ask Bob to compose shots so that the ambulance's roof lights were framed a certain way," Scorsese notes. "He found streets that had the most light and took a lot of footage, much of which was undercranked, and some of which was overcranked. He improvised, getting extra images from setups similar to the ones I specified. Those extra shots proved to be handy in three or four scenes."

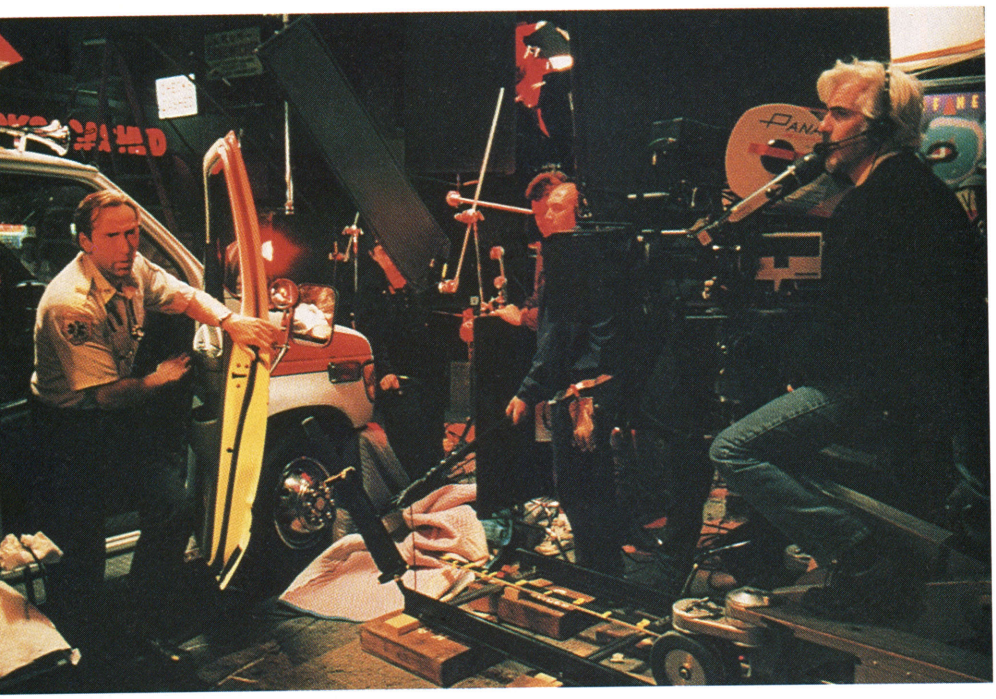
When not approximating the EMTs' hallucinatory point of view, Scorsese turned the cameras from the streets and onto the drivers, showing their various responses — blank, caustic, bewildered and angry — to the bizarre night city flying past them. To film these driving scenes, Richardson mounted up to a half-dozen lights around the ambulance on a process trailer. In almost all instances, the cinematographer avoided the use of constant illumination inside the ambulance cab, preferring to create an avalanche of lighting effects that were ostensibly emanating from the streets. "We turned the lights on and off and swished them to simulate the effect of driving by various light sources," Richardson explains. "We'd go from front light to side light, simulate passing street lamps, and occasionally approximate the look of the actors being hit with car headlights. We sometimes matched our lights to road signs, which is all you read in Manhattan at night."



Pierce attempts to revive a victim while his partner, Marcus (Ving Rhames), seemingly prays for a miracle. Richardson credits production designer Dante Ferretti with creating sets that he could enhance to superior effect with his lighting.

As the story progresses and Pierce becomes more unraveled, the film's visual landscape becomes progressively more chaotic. "There is a more aggressive visual quality as we move through the three different partners Nic has in the film," Richardson notes. "As Nic's character proceeds through his story, our light-

Urban Gothic



Richardson sets up a shot on actor Nicolas Cage. The cameraman's lighting in the picture parallels character Frank Pierce's emotional spiral.

ing and camera angles become much more extreme."

The camera setups on the process trailer were straightforward, except when Scorsese wanted to use a moving camera. "Moving the camera during a driving shot is always very difficult," Richardson acknowledges. To accomplish this goal, the filmmakers occasionally used dollies on the process trailer, which proved extremely difficult on Manhattan's bumpy streets.

Known for his radical photographic style, Richardson often hits actors with powerful blasts of light from above, a tactic that leaves them overexposed by several stops. In *Bringing Out the Dead*, this approach was utilized frequently, and Scorsese made the most of the unsettling look. "If you're speeding down the street at night, the light level is going to rise and fall," the director points out. "We would constantly raise and lower the lights, letting Nic go dark and then occasionally hitting him with strong light. I thought it was especially powerful when we synched one of these hotly-lit images to a voiceover in which Pierce testifies that his role is to 'bear witness' to the plights of the victims. At that instant, the light blasts him, and the effect is emphasized by his white shirt. It's as if his tormented soul is burning in the night."

Richardson acknowledges with a chuckle that his powerful overhead blasts of light were "definitely present." This striking overhead approach was often employed for exteriors as well as interiors. Maxi-Brutes were hung from Condors 30 or 40 feet in the air, parallel to the streets of New York.

Asked to explain the motivations for this technique, Richardson maintains that the question is "difficult to answer. My approach to lighting varies with each film." However, he does cite some examples where the strategy was directly keyed to the storytelling. Early on, when Pierce goes on the film's first emergency call, the stricken Mr. Burke is on the floor, and in several shots the sick man is hit with strong overhead light. "There are several different emotions going on in that scene," Richardson attests. "For Mary Burke, it's a terrifying life-or-death situation fraught with father-daughter emotional baggage. For Frank Pierce, the stakes are high because he's in a downward spiral, but at the same time he's developing an interest in Mary.

"I like the actors, consciously or subconsciously, to be involved in the progress of the light on their own faces, or those of their associates," he continues. "I thought the effect of having the light [reflected onto Pierce from Mr. Burke] rise and fall in intensity, as Pierce went up and down massaging Burke's heart, would help to emphasize the dual nature of Pierce's experience. He's burned out, and his patient is dying, so Pierce feels like hell. However, at the same time he is seeing a glimmer of hope for redemption in the man's daughter."

Hot lights on the actors were also used to suggest the idea of the "resurrection of ghosts." Richardson details, "Here I was most interested in the ethereal quality of the strong, overhead light. I find that usually this lighting approach is most interesting when the actor is on the fringes of the overhead light, when they're just skirting the edges." The result is a ghostly, otherworldly effect.

Richardson emphasizes that he sought to maintain consistency in the use of light on the ailing Mr. Burke, who is motionless through most of the film. "We had strong light on Burke as Pierce pumps his chest," he remarks. "From then on, I altered the light's intensity and hue as Burke's life force goes up and down. I mainly used a cool light on Burke after the initial scene, switching to an emerald green color towards the end to indicate that he is dying."

While these lighting schemes were linked to story points, Scorsese notes that the other unusual film techniques employed in *Bringing Out the Dead* were not always as solidly justified. "Because of the distorted nature of the EMTs' perceptions, we could get away with pretty much anything!" he exults. "We would get a wild idea and go with it, saying, 'That's fun, let's do it.'"

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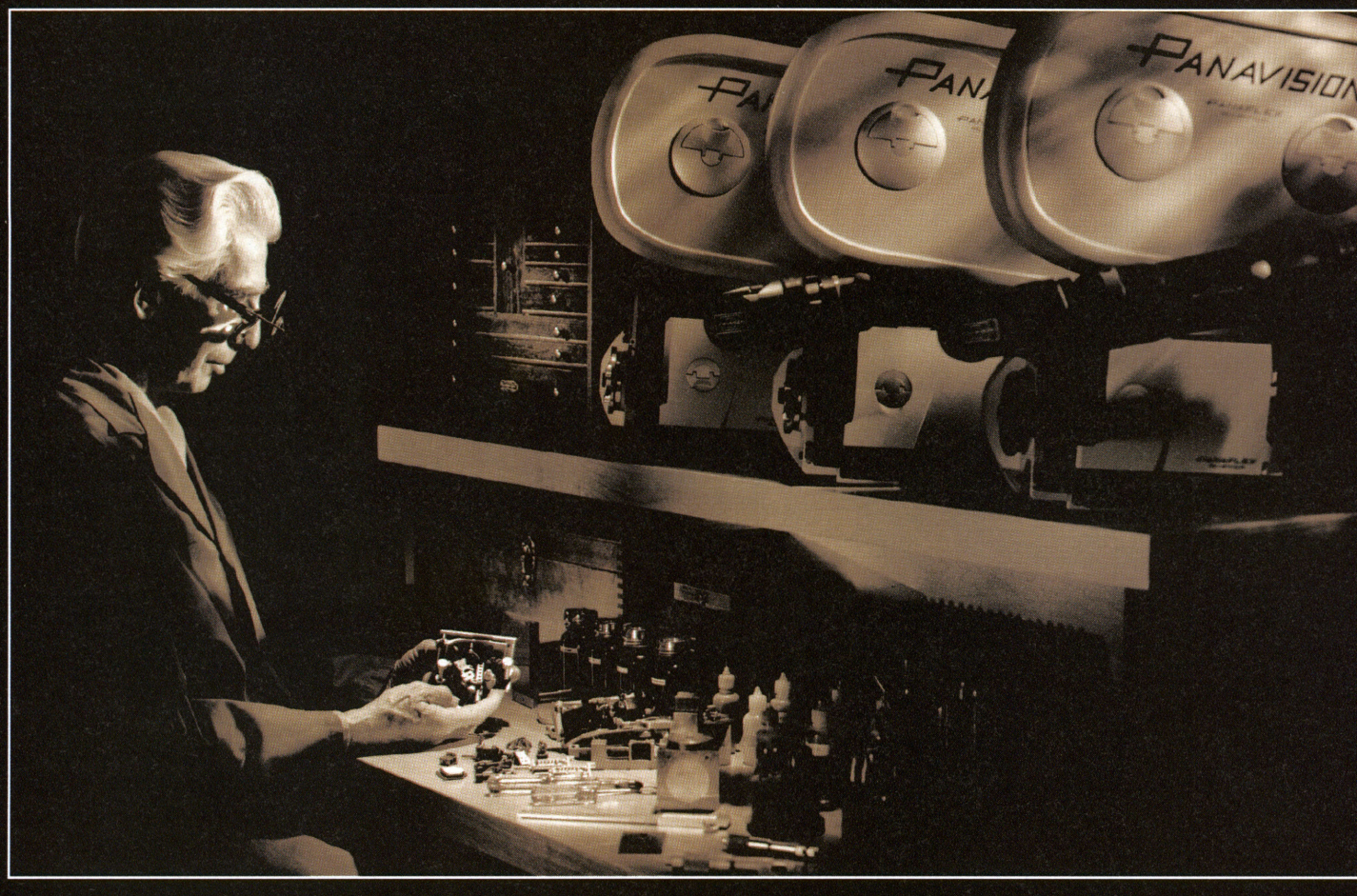

some things are still made by hand

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Urban Gothic

Filming in the set depicting a drug dealer's apartment, Scorsese and Richardson set up a shot with Nic Cage.

This approach led to some wild fast-motion scenes in which the EMTs seem to speed around town as if trapped in a hellish drug rush they can't escape.

Another compelling, technically-complex scene was accomplished entirely in-camera in one time-consuming take. During one of the rare times when Frank Pierce is seen at home, he walks to his apartment's main window, which has a dramatic view of the Manhattan skyline. The camera moves in to fill the frame with the window view, and then shifts into a time-lapse sequence in which the skyline image rapidly progresses from midday to evening. The time-lapse then ends and the shot continues, panning across the room to pick up Pierce in bed.

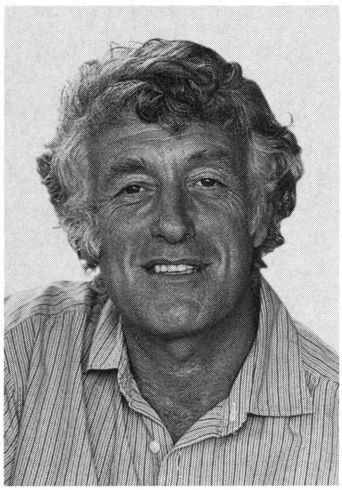
The execution of the shot began with Cage walking to the window. Once he was out of the shot, the camera was switched to time-lapse mode. When that sequence was completed later in the day, the camera was returned to normal speed and panned to find the actor in bed. (It's one of the only moments in the film when Pierce is able to escape his hectic job and rest.)

Despite the melange of edgy cinematic techniques effectively employed in *Bringing Out the Dead*, the film does *not* feature another Richardson trademark that might seem to be a natural fit for a story with hallucinatory elements: the cameraman's frequent use of multiple imaging formats, such as black-and-white, Super 8, videotape and 16mm film. Richardson has previously employed this grab bag of imaging formats to powerful effect in films such as *JFK* (*AC* Feb. '92), *Natural Born Killers* (*AC* Nov. '94), *Nixon* (*AC* March '96) and *U-Turn* (*AC* Oct. '97).

Scorsese explains the absence of multiple formats by stating simply, "I don't like to use different formats in my films. Bob has done an extraordinary job with that sort of thing, but I just don't see the world that way. I also don't have the subject matter for that, certainly not in *Bringing Out the Dead*. To me, the very act of using 8mm, video, 16mm and this and that, all mixed together and thrown onscreen in superimposition and madness, is a moral statement in itself, about the state of our culture. I find that idea interesting, but it had nothing to do with what I was trying to accomplish in *Bringing Out the Dead*." Scorsese reiterates that his emphasis was the drama that results from Pierce's internal spiritual numbness.

Of course, Scorsese has his own array of stylistic signatures, including the use of a moving camera on stationary actors, but he decided to tone down those techniques because of the intensely interior nature of the story. "I didn't want to be distracting, especially in the scenes between Nic and Patricia," the director says. "Neither of them knows how to reach the other; Frank doesn't even know how to talk to a woman. All he can think of to say to her is, 'Do you want to get some

14mm, 18mm, 25mm, 32mm, 40mm, 50mm, 75mm, 100mm



Director of Photography
Roger Deakins ASC BSC

"Here's the way I like to work," says Roger Deakins: "Prime lenses, close to wide open, no diffusion, no flare. For all that, the new Cookes are the best I've worked with"

"There's a lot of mystification about cameras and lenses," says Roger Deakins. "People prefer one major camera or another, but they're *all* good; and so are all three major lens systems."

"Stopped down to T5.6 or further, very few people looking at the screen can tell which make of lens was used, on most shots. But I like to shoot lit interiors between T2.5 and T3.2. At those apertures and wider, I've been able to see some differences."

"A while back, I went straight from shooting a film with one set of lenses to shooting another with a different make. I noticed that the other lenses weren't really as fast, wide open, as their markings *said* they were. Looking at the printer lights, I could see I wasn't getting as much exposure. When you're taking a filmstock to its limit, that makes a difference."

"I've seen the bare lightbulb test footage; and I made some comparison dusk street-scene shots myself, when the first Cookes were delivered. *Fantastic.* No double kick from car headlights, even wide open. And in terms of clarity and sharpness, the Cookes were the best I'd seen."

"On the film I'm shooting now, we made a sunset shot with a very hot sun in the frame. I used the Cooke 32mm with nothing in front of the lens; and I knew it would be clean. That's what these lenses do for me: *they let me take a few more risks.* I feel more confident about putting a hot light or the sun in frame and still getting shadow detail and little or no flare."

"There's only one thing I don't like: not enough focal lengths! They tell me they're coming out with more — I wish they'd hurry up." *

Roger Deakins

A Director of Photography since 1983, his film credits include FARGO and KUNDUN, for both of which he won Academy Award Nominations; and SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION, for which he won both an Academy Award Nomination and an ASC Award.

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* *When Mr. Deakins said there weren't enough focal lengths, we had six. Now we have eight; and soon, we'll have eleven.*

Urban Gothic

pizza?' He's reaching out, but how can he? He's a complete, utter spiritual wreck all the way until the end, when he finally gains some perspective and says to Mary Burke, 'We're all dying.'

"Something happens in that moment," Scorsese continues. "All along, he's been trying to reach her, but due to his response to the incredible stresses of his job, he's cut off from people, particularly women. He has a great need for forgiveness, but first he must forgive himself. When you're dealing with that sort of material, you don't want to move the camera; you leave it alone, especially if you're filming in anamorphic widescreen."

Scorsese's fondness for wide optics is highlighted in the aforementioned scene in which Pierce and his partner try to save the life of Mary Burke's father. Wide shots taken low to the floor reveal the overall tableau of the ailing man, the medics, Mary and the other members of her family. These shots are dramatically cut against tight singles of Pierce performing his duties with great intensity. The wider shots were framed with a 35mm lens and the tighter shots with a 100mm; cutting between them visually emphasizes Pierce's intense dedication by suggesting how completely he blocks out surrounding distractions.

Assessing this scene, Scorsese submits, "These guys come into a situation where the relatives are battling and everyone is going through hell. But watch what Nic and John [Goodman] do. They go in like soldiers, which is the only way to handle the situation. They say, 'Okay, how long ago did he stop breathing?' Then it's *bang* — get him on the floor and rip open his shirt. They've got to get their routine going, and to concentrate, they cut out everything around them. As a filmmaker, I felt I should go right into their world."

Scorsese has always incorporated spectacular crane moves into

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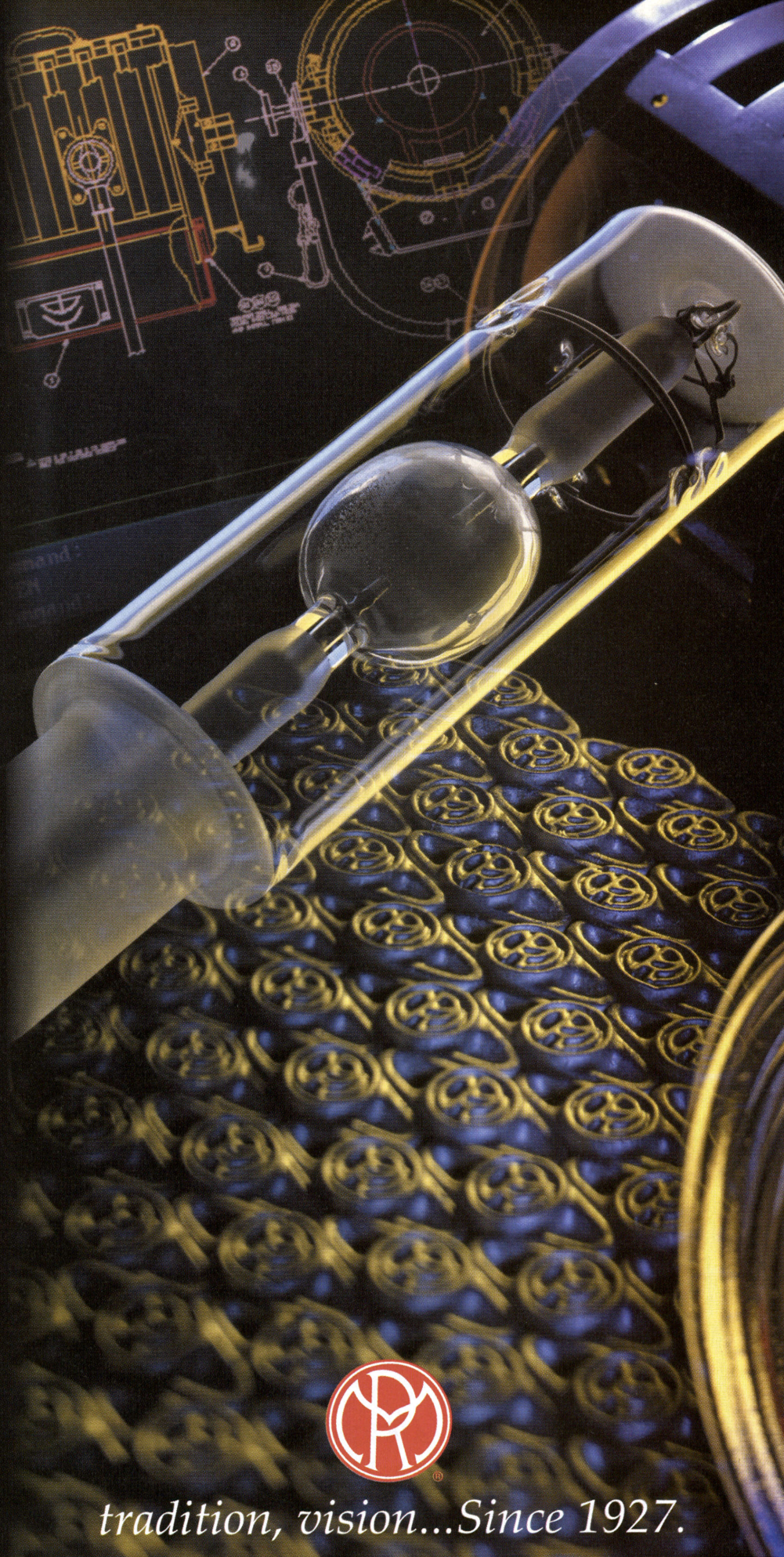

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his work, and *Bringing Out the Dead* is no exception. In one breathtaking shot, Cage's ambulance speeds to the site of a drug-related double shooting. As the ambulance approaches the crime scene, the camera rides along, peering down from above the ambulance's cab. When the ambulance stops, the camera continues moving, dropping dramatically to the ground to reveal the prostrate victim.

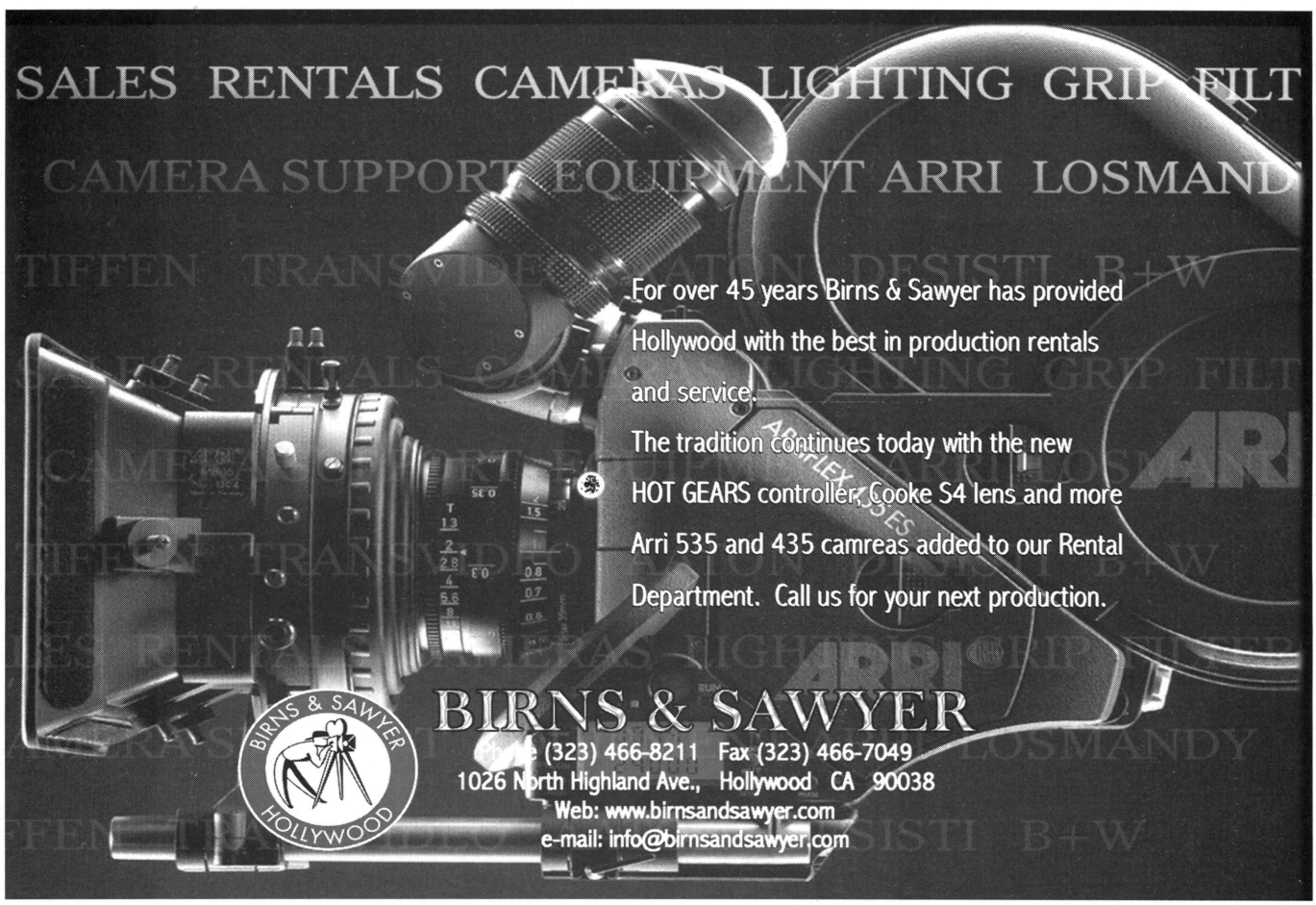
Richardson reveals that this shot, which was executed with a Pegasus crane, was originally longer than the version that appears in the final cut. The camera's perspective actually started out low, 40 feet behind the ambulance. Timing the long crane move, which then rose atop the ambulance and wound up on the actor lying on the sidewalk, proved to be one of the trickier aspects of the shot.

While most of the film was shot on Kodak Vision 500T 5279, along with some Vision 200T 5274, many of the ambulance-mounted shots were captured on Kodak's then-new Vision 800T 5289. "I think I only got about 5,000 feet of the 800T," Richardson says. "It was useful, though, especially when we were filming outside of the main midtown core. Downtown, the light levels at night get pretty low, and the faster stock helped us capture some of those streets. I was cautious with it, because I didn't know what it would look like once it was finally onscreen, but it worked well for those shots."

In general, night exterior lighting was accomplished simply by using "the biggest instruments available," including diffused Dinos, Maxi-Brutes and 20Ks, either as overheads or in more conventional placements.

While the vast majority of the film takes place at night and indoors, there are a few daytime exteriors, all of which occur after Frank Pierce finally succeeds in quitting the job that is literally driving him mad. In keeping with the off-kilter nature of the tale and to maintain a cooler feel, these scenes were all filmed with tungsten stock (mostly Vision 200T) that was not corrected for daylight with lens filtration. "That was part of our attempt to avoid the reds and yellows," Richardson states. "Also, the scenes take place at dawn, when the light is cool." The cinematographer tried to film the exteriors in shade, constructing shelters when that was not possible. He also underexposed his shots (by about one stop below key) to lend the scenes a bit of a day-for-night look that was appropriate for an early-morning scene.

Richardson's A-camera was a Platinum Panaflex. While Scorsese often favors the use of multiple



cameras to pick up improvised dialogue, the filmmakers used that tactic less often on this picture. "Most of those dialogue opportunities were in the ambulance cab, and we had problems hiding one camera from the other," Richardson explains.

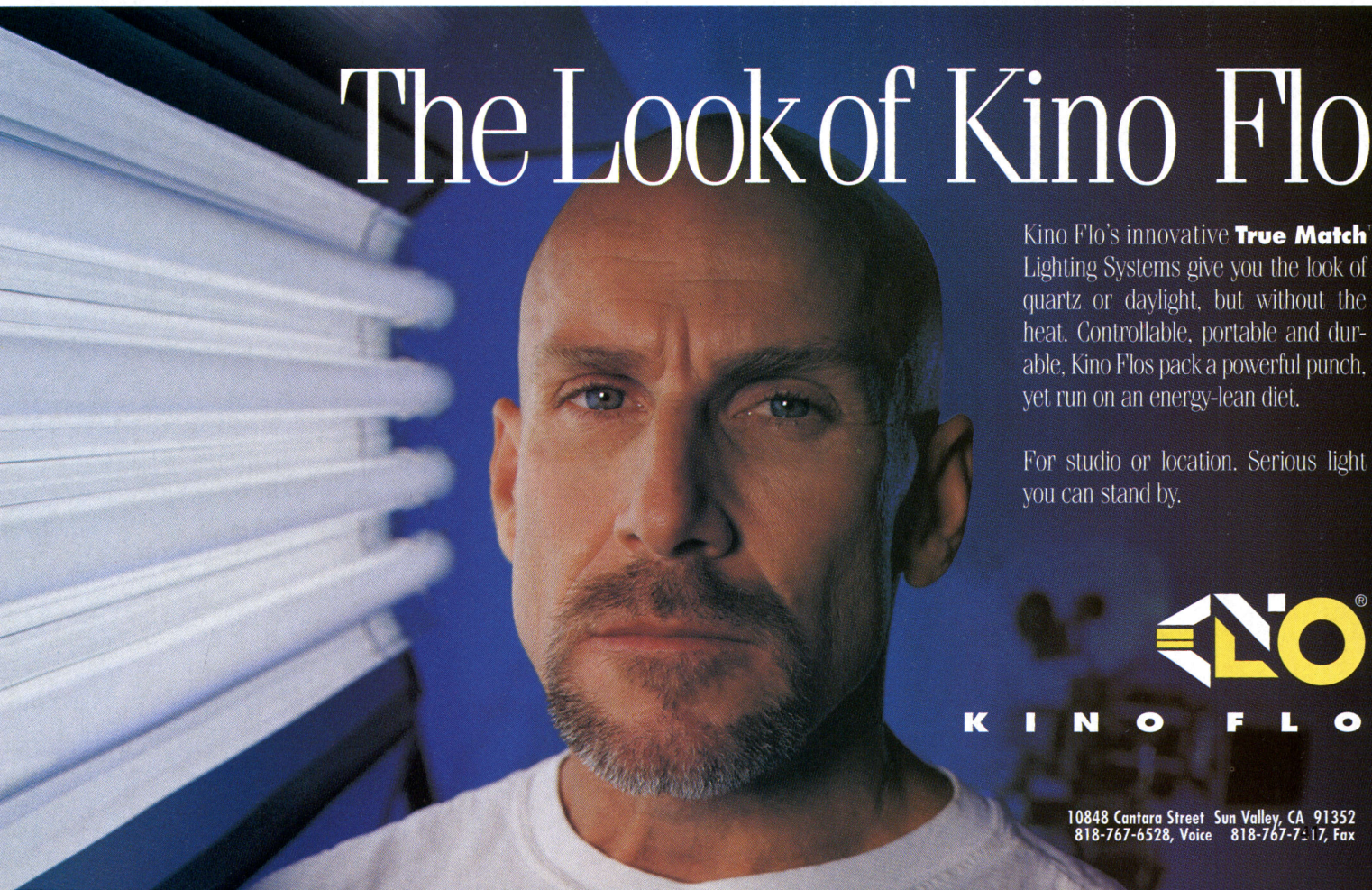
The story also dictated what Richardson describes as a relatively "low-tech approach" in general. "*Bringing Out the Dead* does not have the look of a big, digital studio film," he says. "It has a much rawer quality."

Some skillful digital work was utilized to great effect, however. Throughout the film, Pierce is haunted by the memory of Rose, a young woman whose life he was not able to save. Her phantom appears throughout the film, most chillingly toward the end of the story. As Pierce rides down the street, he passes a group of young women who are all about the same age and size. When the women turn around and glare at him accusingly, we realize that all of them wear Rose's angry face.

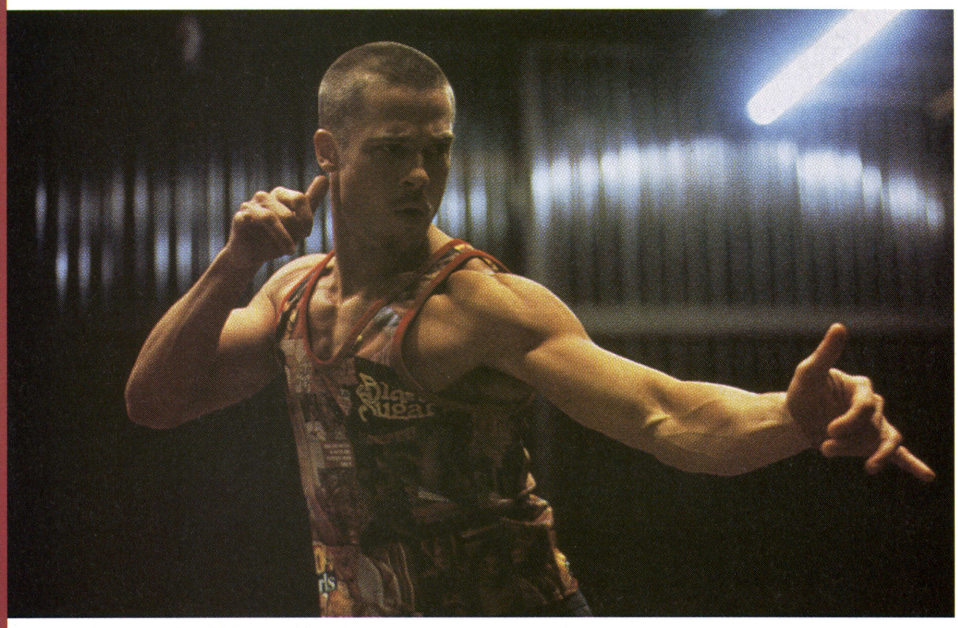
Richardson compliments visual effect supervisor Michael Owens of Industrial Light & Magic for his fine work on the multifaceted shot. "Michael works very hard to approximate the lighting in the scenes he is manipulating, as do most good effects people," the cameraman says. "In this instance, Michael asked me to light the scene however I wanted, and he assured me that he would work his machinery to accommodate that light."

Given that freedom to work, Richardson raised the light level on the building behind the actors about 1 ½ stops during the shot, using Dino lights on dimmers to heighten the scene's hallucinatory nature. He elaborates, "When you have freedom in lighting such shots, you can create a much more seamless feel. If cinematographers don't have the freedom to light digital shots as they would any others, you can see it onscreen. Michael really did a lovely job with that shot."

Scorsese concludes that the biggest challenge on the production did not stem from technical or artistic concerns, but from the difficulty of "staying sane at locations such as 11th Avenue and 54th Street" during 75 grueling nights of shooting. "That schedule was pretty rough, especially now that I'm older," the veteran director acknowledges. "Working the way we did for 75 nights does tend to alter your view of humanity and life. It creates an oppressive feeling, especially when it gets to be about four in the morning. As Joe Connelly says in his book, 'It is always four a.m., and it is crazy and dangerous and funny all at once.'" ■



Anarchy in the U.S.A.



Director David Fincher teams with first-time feature cinematographer Jeff Cronenweth to craft a tale of modern disillusionment in *Fight Club*.

by Christopher Probst

Unit photography by Merrick Morton

In his 1996 novel *Fight Club*, writer Chuck Palahniuk posed this question: What do you do when you realize the world is not destined to be your oyster, when you recognize the innocuous banalities of everyday life as nothing more than a severely loosened lid on a seething underworld cauldron of unchecked impulses and social atrocities?

Director David Fincher is no stranger to this theme. All of his previous films, *Alien*^{3} (see *AC* July '92), *Seven* (*AC* Oct. '95) and *The Game* (*AC* Sept. '97), have explored the dark side of the human psyche. With *Fight Club*, Fincher once again demonstrates his affinity for this bleak and foreboding realm, displaying a deft cinematic sensibility and a gift for taut visual execution.

Fight Club opens as its disenfranchised — and nameless — narrator (Edward Norton) feigns illness and begins attending cancer-patient support group meetings in a vain attempt to find purpose within his lonely, mundane existence. Through a chance encounter on an airplane, he meets the enigmatic Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt), the founder of Fight Club, an underground group of young men who take part in bare-knuckle brawls concocted to vent their pre-apocalyptic angst.

Fincher has worked with a score of prominent cinematographers on commercials, music videos and feature films. Interestingly, he began shooting *Alien*^{3} with the late Jordan Cronenweth, ASC — who left the production due to his battle with Parkinson's disease, and was replaced by Alex Thomson, BSC. For *Fight Club*, Fincher enlisted Jordan's son, Jeff Cronenweth, to realize his uniquely dystopian vision.

While working with his father on a number of pictures in various capacities, Cronenweth was afforded the rare opportunity to have a master cinematographer as his personal tutor, mentor and best friend. "I was exposed to filmmaking quite early on," says Cronenweth. "On summer vacations, I was able to stay with my father on sets, wherever he happened to be at the time. I loved the way the crew interacted, and the collaborations that took place. When I was later presented with opportunities in this business, I thought it would be quite foolish if I didn't at least make a go of it."

Cronenweth worked as a loader and second assistant before graduating from high school, and then enrolled in film school at USC, where he studied cinematography. Among his classmates were future

Photos courtesy of 20th Century Fox.

peers John Schwartzman, ASC and Robert Brinkmann, as well as director Phil Joanou, who would go on to make three pictures (*State of Grace*, *U2: Rattle and Hum* and *Final Analysis)* with his father.

After graduation, Cronenweth resumed working with his father, joining a core camera team that included operators John Toll, ASC and Dan Lerner, and first assistants Bing Sokolsky and Art Schwab. Moving up to first assistant, Cronenweth began to work with Toll, who was just beginning his career as a cameraman, and veteran Sven Nykvist, ASC. "I couldn't have learned from better people than John, Sven and my father," Cronenweth relates. "They were all soft-spoken, but very tenacious in achieving their goals. It was a great experience to watch them, learn set etiquette and see how they delegated responsibilities and dealt with producers and crews. I did six pictures with my father and eight pictures with Sven."

Fostering his son's development in the craft, the elder Cronenweth would often let him handle much of the on-set "grunt work" — establishing the lighting and camera placement — as well as operate. It was this formative period that introduced Jeff to many of the producers and directors who would later hire him as a cinematographer.

A key figure in this progression was Fincher, a longtime admirer of Jordan's work who had collaborated with him on a host of music videos and commercials. "Once again, I was fortunate enough to have worked with David through my father," says Cronenweth. "The first thing my father shot for David was the Madonna video 'Oh Father.' A little while after that job, David called and asked me to meet him at Panavision to do some pickup shots. When I got there, he said, 'Okay, where's your meter?' I ended up shooting some inserts for the video as well."

After a string of projects with the two Cronenweths, culminating in *Alien*^{3}, Fincher continued to bring Jeff in on projects as an operator after Jordan retired. The young cameraman was hired to operate B-camera on *Seven*, and several months after that picture had wrapped, Cronenweth was brought in to operate on an extensive 18-day reshoot with cinematographer Harris Savides (the film's primary cameraman, Darius Khondji, ASC, AFC was unavailable). However, when the workload proved to be even more substantial than anticipated, Cronenweth was given his own additional unit to shoot crucial pickups, as well as portions of the film's striking title sequence. He later served in a similar capacity on *The Game.*

When Cronenweth got a call from Fincher to discuss *Fight Club*, the cinematographer — who by then was shooting full-time on commercials and music videos for such top directors as Mark Romanek, Charles Wittenmeier and Matthew Rolston — naturally assumed he was being considered for more second-unit work. He was wrong. "I couldn't think of a better movie to do as my first film than *Fight Club,*" says Cronenweth. "Although I knew it would be rough, I had so much trust in David as a filmmaker that I had the confidence to do the film. He has such a distinct eye and is such a talented storyteller that the visuals in his films are always a collaboration in the truest sense. His knowledge of the medium allows a cameraman to go to places that other directors would either be afraid of or not understand."

While discussing the look of *Fight Club*, Fincher and Cronenweth elected to continue on the visual path that the director had begun exploring on *Seven* and *The Game.* "*Fight Club* is a reality-driven picture about Edward Norton's daily nine-to-five doldrums," Cronenweth details. "In all of the 'normal' reality situations, the look was supposed to be fairly bland and realistic. For the scenes when he is with Tyler, though, David wanted the look to be more hyper-real in a torn-down, deconstructed sense — a visual metaphor of what he's heading into.

"A lot of the movie's look was planned out early, in collaboration with the production designer, Alex McDowell. We chose to use heavily desaturated colors in all of the costuming, makeup and art direction, and also established that we were going to make as much use as

Opposite page: Fight Club's enigmatic leader, Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt), prepares for battle.The filmmakers shot in Super 35 to achieve a widescreen frame in order to lend scope and tension to their compositions. Above: The film's nameless narrator (Edward Norton) plunges further into Fight Club's sinister underworld. Fincher and Cronenweth opted to incorporate the natural lighting of their locations. "If the surroundings had a particular color of light, then we'd go with that and perhaps add to it," says Cronenweth.

Anarchy in the U.S.A.

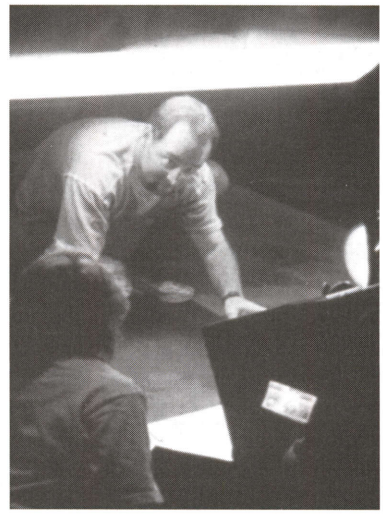
Right: "When we started to establish what the basement of Lou's Tavern would look like," says Cronenweth (seen below), "I found there wasn't enough practical ambient light available to photograph a number of angles. Even though the fights were choreographed and staged to the camera, people tend to go in different directions. I had to be prepared to photograph the fights in basically any direction, so I needed some more sources that would fit into that environment." Gaffer Claudio Miranda strategically placed "Budget Busters" around the set. "They complimented the existing lighting quite well, and were totally believable as a type of source that the characters would add to their little 'arena.'"

possible of the available light — both natural and practical — that was at the locations."

Before production began, Cronenweth was given time to perform tests and establish his lighting and exposure scheme. "I encourage anybody shooting a movie to do as much experimentation in the tests as they are allowed," the cinematographer advises. "As an assistant, I would call the lab every morning and check the printing lights. Having watched the dailies with the director of photography the night before, I'd give the lab any adjustments that needed to be made during the printing. While working as an assistant or operator on 14 or 15 pictures, I got an incredible education in printing. I was away from printing for a few years when I first started shooting commercials and music videos, but thankfully, all of my experience came right back when I started *Fight Club*. Obviously, you don't really want to start your first image [on your first feature] on a bad note."

He explains, "We had quite a lot of makeup and wardrobe tests because of all the prosthetics [cuts, swollen eyes and bruises] being used in the film. There were approximately 33 different prosthetic changes between the two lead characters. Within this time, however, I was also able to test every type of practical used on the film. I tested several different film stocks and processes — like pushing, pulling and flashing — to establish the contrast and tonalities we were looking for. I had portions of the set walls brought in, and we tested the various paint colors in both matte and gloss finishes."

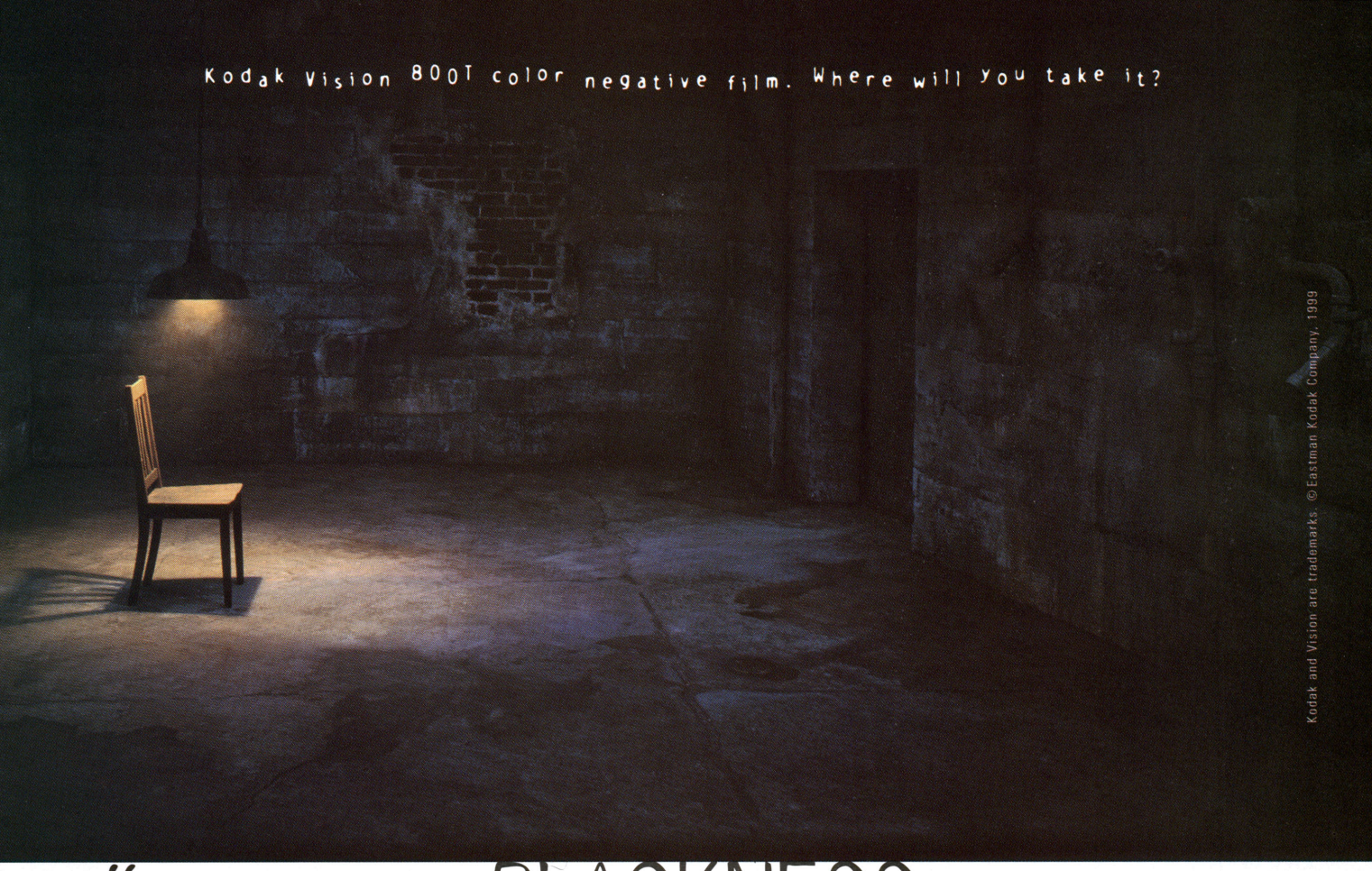
Cronenweth photographed



Fight Club with Panavision Platinum cameras outfitted with Primo prime lenses. He utilized Eastman Kodak EXR 5248 and Vision 250D 5246 for the daylight exteriors and a few select day interiors, and Vision 500T 5279 for all the remaining interiors and night sequences. The cinematographer notes that some of the night exteriors were also flashed about 5 percent in the lab. Rating the stocks at their recommended ISO specifications, he achieved printing lights in the high 30s to low 40s at Technicolor in North Hollywood. The lab will also be treating a number of the film's prints to an 80-IR level of ENR (see "Soup du Jour" *AC* Nov. '98 for information about this process).

Cronenweth's camera crew consisted of A- and B-camera operators Conrad W. Hall and Chris Squires, Steadicam operator Chris Haarhoff, first assistant John Connor, second assistant Lisa Guerriero (who pulled double duty as the B-camera first assistant) and loader Gary Kanner.

Like *Seven* and *The Game*, the film was framed in the 2.35:1 aspect ratio by way of the Super 35 process, a format Fincher favors for maxi-



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Jens Fischer
Feature film cinematographer, recently completed *Wagen Ut (Way Out)*

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Anarchy in the U.S.A.

Right: Marla (Helena Bonham Carter) is the love interest of both Tyler and Edward Norton's character. Gaffer Claudio Miranda explains the lighting of the kitchen scenes, stating, "The kitchen was pretty much lit with a three-quarter toplight or from the side. In the daytime, we created a kind of cloudy-day ambience with a flood of light from a wall of Skypans blasting through 12'-by-12' diffusion. Above the patio door and windows in the kitchen, we also had some Kino Flos to continue the daylight, as well as some Decapods to create stronger sunlight coming in through the windows." Below: A dimly lit interior in Tyler's Paper Street home, illustrating the often underexposed treatment of the actor's keylight.

mum flexibility in composition, in terms of both the film's eventual video release and the increased range of spherical focal lengths available in the Primo series. "David also likes Super 35 because it allows us to use less equipment, light with smaller sources, and expose for practical night exteriors and actually get something out of the existing lighting at the location," notes Cronenweth. "In fact, some of our practical locations were chosen based on what the city lights did in the backgrounds."

Cronenweth worked with gaffer Claudio Miranda and key grip Michael Coo, both Fincher veterans from *The Game*, to incorporate this naturalistic aesthetic into the film's lighting design. "A good part of the lighting employed some sort of toplight source," he explains. "Many practical locations are lit by fluorescents in the ceiling, so we purposefully tried to maintain that element of reality. Toplight seemed to help with the prosthetics as well, by showing off the integrity of the wounds without revealing too much.

"If the surroundings of a certain location had a particular color of light, then we'd go with that color and perhaps add to it. We carried a whole array of different fluorescents — Chroma 50s, normal 3200°K bulbs, Cool Whites and Warm White Deluxes — but if there weren't any specific colors in a given scene, we'd usually use white light or perhaps a little warmer light."

To model actors' faces, Cronenweth would often start with his top-light ambience and then add a back edge- or halflight, motivated by any practicals in the scene. "The general game plan was to make sure that the actors separated from their environment," he reveals, "and then play the actors's edgelight off of the practicals as much as possible without actually 'lighting' them. For this film, we didn't necessarily want to be able to see directly into their faces. It was more interesting and appropriate to the story to force the audience to pay attention. Faces were generally underexposed 1½ to 2 stops, though it depended upon the scene. If the scene called for the audience to really be able to see them, I'd make the faces closer to 1½ stops under. In either case, it was still important to feel the presence of their eyes, so we often played with eyelights — everything from Obie lights to Kino Flos taped to the matte-box — which we usually kept three stops under."

"We lit the faces mostly with Kino Flos covered with ¼ CTO and muslin," adds gaffer Claudio Miranda. "The angle and direction of that depended on where the practicals were. If it was a door shot, the key may have to come from the top, or if a pillar got in the way, we might bring it in from the side. David and Jeff wanted everything to be as natural as possible and allowed areas to go dark. We then played with creating blacks that you could *just* read into with hints of reflections for texture."

The production spent about half of its 138-day schedule on practical locations in and around Los Angeles. The other half of the shoot was executed on soundstages at 20th Century Fox in Century City.

One key setpiece in the film is

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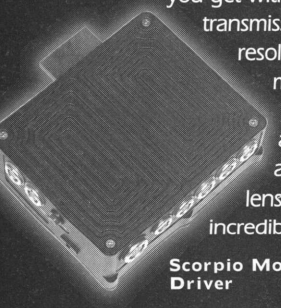
The Scorpio Focus offers remote lens control with greater precision and reliability than you get with conventional radio transmission. Scorpio's 16 bit resolution allows you to manipulate focus, iris and zoom with absolute pin-point accuracy. The digital lens motors provide incredibly smooth operation.



Scorpio Motor Driver

It's a speed aperture control, too.

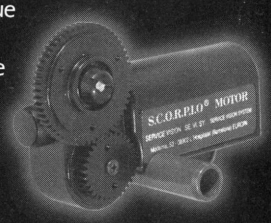
The Focus also operates as a speed aperture control. Compatible with Arriflex and Moviecam cameras, the Focus controls camera speed, iris & shutter angle. Ramp the camera manually or program a preset time duration and store it into the unit's memory. So repeated shots, multiple takes and complex move sequences are easier to nail.

Remote control rack focus & vertigo effects.

To activate the Focus' Vertigo Tracker control function, just program in a sequence of auto focus and zoom moves. Advance the dolly and the lens is automatically positioned. Repeat the same sequence as the dolly is moved forward & back to provide easy set-up of fast rack focus shots. Or program the focus and zoom with up to 60 points along the belt to create vertigo effects. For this function the Focus is equipped with a digital encoder arm, motor driver interface cable, tracking belt, and universal mounting brackets.

Super powerful motors.

Scorpio's lightweight digital lens motors deliver more torque than other wireless control systems with three increasing power levels. They feature integral lens mount gears, and utilize the highest quality optical encoders for maximum precision.



Scorpio Digital Motor

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Anarchy in the U.S.A.

Top: The exterior of the Paper Street home was created in San Pedro, California. "We tried to stay away from the traditional huge backlight sources and the blue 'moonlight' look," says Cronenweth. "Most of our lights were kept pretty white. In San Pedro there are a lot of sodium-vapor lights that take on the orangey hue, so if we did occasionally use a backlight, we'd often balance our lights to the sodium vapors and play it as another street lamp. For the house exterior, I used an 8K Tungsten balloon, which allowed us to get the light out of the frame easily and get us a base exposure that was about 2 to 2 ½ stops under. We also surrounded the house with 20Ks and some of Claudio's DecaLights." Right: Inside an incomplete high-rise office building, Tyler Durden is lit by a practical halogen worklamp.

Tyler Durden's Paper Street home. This disintegrating, dilapidated location was created in two parts: an exterior facade constructed in San Pedro, California, and interiors erected on Stage 15 at Fox. "The interior of the Paper Street house was a beautifully built set designed by Alex McDowell," submits Cronenweth. "It was well into a state of decay, with ceiling pieces coming down and wallpaper and paint peeling, so we had a wide range of textures to work with. We wanted to get a feeling of the old, decrepit house, as well as the deconstructed world the characters were living in. I played the lighting quite down, usually underexposing the walls by 2 to 2 ½ stops, so that you could just barely see into them."

Further intrigue was added to the moody visuals through Fincher and Cronenweth's astute use of compositional detail, and the marrying of texture and tonality to a nearly monochromatic frame. "We played with crosslight, toplight, sidelight and uplight to establish where and what practicals should be placed to bring out the textures of the environment," Cronenweth explains. "Also, when we'd place a practical, we'd then use an additional concealed raking-source to bring the wall's texture out and create some contrast with highlights and shadows. The type of instrument we used for this really depended on the situation, and how broad we needed to be with the light, but we mainly used standard tungsten units that we softened with some 216 or 250."

Another aspect of *Fight Club*'s visual palette was the conscious use of depth of field to add dimension to the frame. "T2.3 was pretty much the stop for the entire movie," Cronenweth says. "Whether we were inside or outside, we always wanted to keep a shallow depth of field to keep the audience focused on what we wanted them to see. I'm very confident about shooting with the Primo lenses wide-open, but exposure-wise, shooting at a T2.3 was very comfortable, and I liked what it did to the practicals."

To light the massive house interiors, Cronenweth had Miranda and his pre-rigging crew surround the two-story structure with an array of 5K Skypans to illuminate the set's numerous newspaper- and grime-covered windows. "We were originally going to use Image 80 Kino Flos outside the windows, but unfortunately, with a set that large — even on a film with a budget as big as *Fight Club*'s — there were financial constraints," says Cronenweth. "The Skypans worked out well, and because the window dressing was quite substantial, they had more of the punch we needed. All of the Skypans were on dimmers, so we could move fairly quickly from room to room and instantly have ambient daylight coming through the windows.

"Inside the set," he elaborates, "we'd continue our 'daylight' with specific units lighting the actors. Since we used a lot of wide-angle lenses that were usually down low to the ground, we often ended up having smaller units just out of the frame, or having to walk back larger units. Fortunately, the walls were so dark that the light would fall off nicely. We also added some specific

units to help model the actors on a shot-by-shot basis. In those instances, we'd usually screw a baby plate into a wall — that [damage] only helped add to the 'aging' of the house."

A good percentage of *Fight Club* occurs at night, often in menacingly dark locales. In fact, even during daylight scenes, the frame was often weighted with deeply shadowed areas. For nighttime scenes set inside the house, Cronenweth kept the light from the Skypans outside the windows, but he notes that he "knocked them way down and added some blue and diffusion to them." An added visual motif of the night scenes was the home's faulty electricity, which is caused by numerous leaks and water damage. "For the greater part of the film, you'll notice practicals that flicker every once in a while. The only time you really see a drastic change is during a storm sequence, when there's a big power failure. That created an interesting lighting dilemma since there was very little 'moonlight' coming through windows. In some instances, we had the actors lit by candles, and I shot wide-open at a T1.9 to get as much interactive candlelight as possible."

The basement set of Lou's Tavern, also constructed on Stage 15 at Fox, serves as the Fight Club's ramshackle brawling ring. The set was designed with a low, pipe-laced ceiling and cement floors littered with junk in the corners. Fincher and Cronenweth wanted to lend the set a bit of a boxing-ring vibe, and "played the fights in the center of the room, using four China-hat practicals hanging from the ceiling to create a ring-like setting," the cinematographer notes. "The China hats were specifically styled lamps that had a kind of submarine-style cage around a PH-212 bulb that we dimmed down. We also had additional Kino Flo tubes, wrapped in muslin and 1/4 CTO, hidden up in the ceiling studs.

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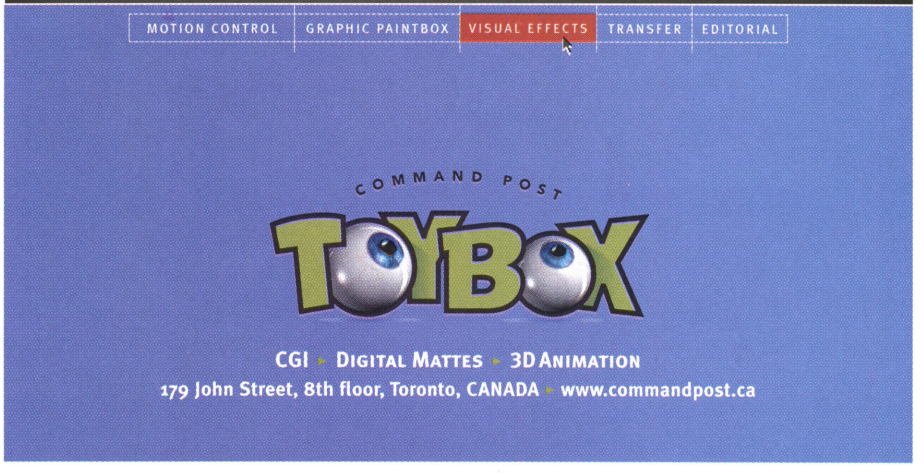

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We knocked those tubes way down with some black paper tape to provide just enough of an ambience over the crowd, which we kept about 1 ¾ to 2 stops under, so the viewers would just barely see them. We wanted to read the crowd in the background, but we didn't necessarily want to see who they were. We also had an array of practicals placed on various parts of the walls about 20 feet behind the crowd, which helped separate them as well."

"We lit a lot of Lou's basement with what we called 'Budget Busters,'" adds Miranda. "They were basically small, clamp-on aluminum work lamps that you can get from Home Depot for $2. We had the art department age them down and make them ugly; then we'd just throw one of them up to create a glow in the background, which really added a lot of dimension and texture. We put those all over the place in the film, using standard 60-watt household lightbulbs, and Jeff absolutely loved them."

The film's fight scenes also adhered to Fincher's realistic aesthetic. Deliberately avoiding flashy camerawork and refusing to stylize the skirmishes, the director elected to take a more objective view of the fights, often locking the camera down to a fixed position. However, the filmmakers did want the fights to become increasingly brutal as the story developed. "We come back to the fights several times," reveals Cronenweth. "The blocking depended on the specific fight and how violent it was supposed to be. At first, the camera was more of an observer. As the fights progressed, the camera took more of the point of view of the fighter. In fact, the last fight in the movie is quite gruesome. There wasn't a lot of handheld camerawork at shoulder height. A lot of the fights were covered from low angles, from between shoulders or through feet with either a dolly or a static camera.

"We used two cameras on the fights almost all of the time, and we mapped out specific shots for each sequence," he continues. "The fights were pretty short — a minute at most. We also went with the idea that the fighters would play in and out of the light sources. Occasionally, they'd pop into full lighting when they were directly beneath a practical, but if they were out of the light, they were *out* of the light. Either way, there was always something in the foreground or the background that provided enough exposure."

The other significant set constructed for the film was an incomplete interior high-rise office that overlooks a mammoth cityscape TransLight measuring nearly 130' wide by 36' tall. "The TransLight was almost a total disaster," recalls Cronenweth. "We sent out an 8 x 10 photographer, who shot the elements used to create a 'skyline' that we liked. We then shot some tests of individual 1' by 8' strips made with different tones and densities; from those tests, we determined which density and color we liked best. The TransLight was then custom-made in two sections. Unfortunately, the final TransLight was delivered much later than we expected — just two days before we were supposed to shoot the scenes! I then sent Claudio back to shoot a test. We lit the TransLight with 144 5K Skypans aimed through an enormous silk. However, when we screened those tests the next day, we were all horrified to discover that half of the TransLight was two stops denser and a lot cooler than the other, and the entire TransLight was too blue overall. Of course, we found this out the day before we were to shoot that entire sequence!

"As a desperate solution, we had a rigging crew come in that night and change out 86 of the Skypans to 2K globes and add ½ CTO to the bluer side of the TransLight. When we shot the actual scene, I used an 81EF filter on the camera to correct

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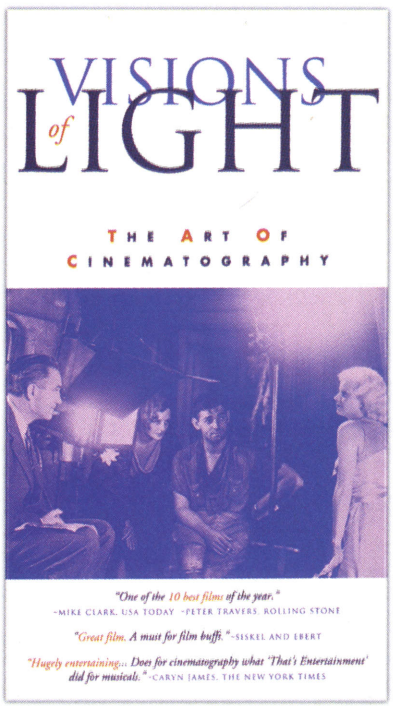

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Anarchy in the U.S.A.

for the entire TransLight being too blue, which meant I had to add ½ CTB on all of the tungsten sources inside the building. Finally, we hung a net about five feet in front of the TransLight to slightly diffuse it. If the net moved slightly, it gave the appearance that the city lights were twinkling."

With the TransLight's color and density issues corrected, the production proceeded to shoot the nighttime opening and closing scenes in the 'still-under-construction' set. "Inside, we used these yellow, dual-headed construction work lights with little quartz bulbs in them, as if the construction workers had them hanging around," says Cronenweth. "Those lights worked out quite well, and we played a lot of them into camera to create flares, or let them play against a wall to silhouette the actors. There was some subtle ambient moonlight coming into the set, generated by 18 Image 80s, covered with full CTB and muslin and hung across the top of the windows. Additionally, we used about six 4', four-bank Kino Flos with ½ CTO on them to simulate sodium-vapor lights from the 'street' below. We also had some Kinos inside to accent things here and there, but most of the scene was lit with the work lights on the floor. The idea was that there were no existing light fixtures working in the office space yet, so they just used all of these plug-in practicals."

Fight Club also features some subtle but effective rearscreen process work. Building upon Fincher's process experiences on *The Game*, Miranda and Cronenweth devised a simple yet elegant solution to this age-old cinematographer's nightmare. Incorporating Fincher's idea of mapping out each shot's size and focus prior to the shooting of background plates, Cronenweth photographed the Long Beach background VistaVision plates out-of-focus at the predetermined focus distance of the final shot, using a SpaceCam mounted on a Shotmaker camera-car. "In addition to our rear-screen projection, we had rain pouring down on the process car, and then the actors inside the car," Cronenweth says. "We achieved a fairly sophisticated look with interactive light by using scenic projectors fitted with rain and water patterns. We aimed the projectors into these Mylar boxes, which we constructed to control the rain effects from contaminating the rear-screen element. The boxes, however, also made the image sort of shimmer as it bounced around in there."

Miranda adds, "In addition to the scene projectors aimed into the Mylar boxes, we had some hitting the actors directly. Next, on each side of

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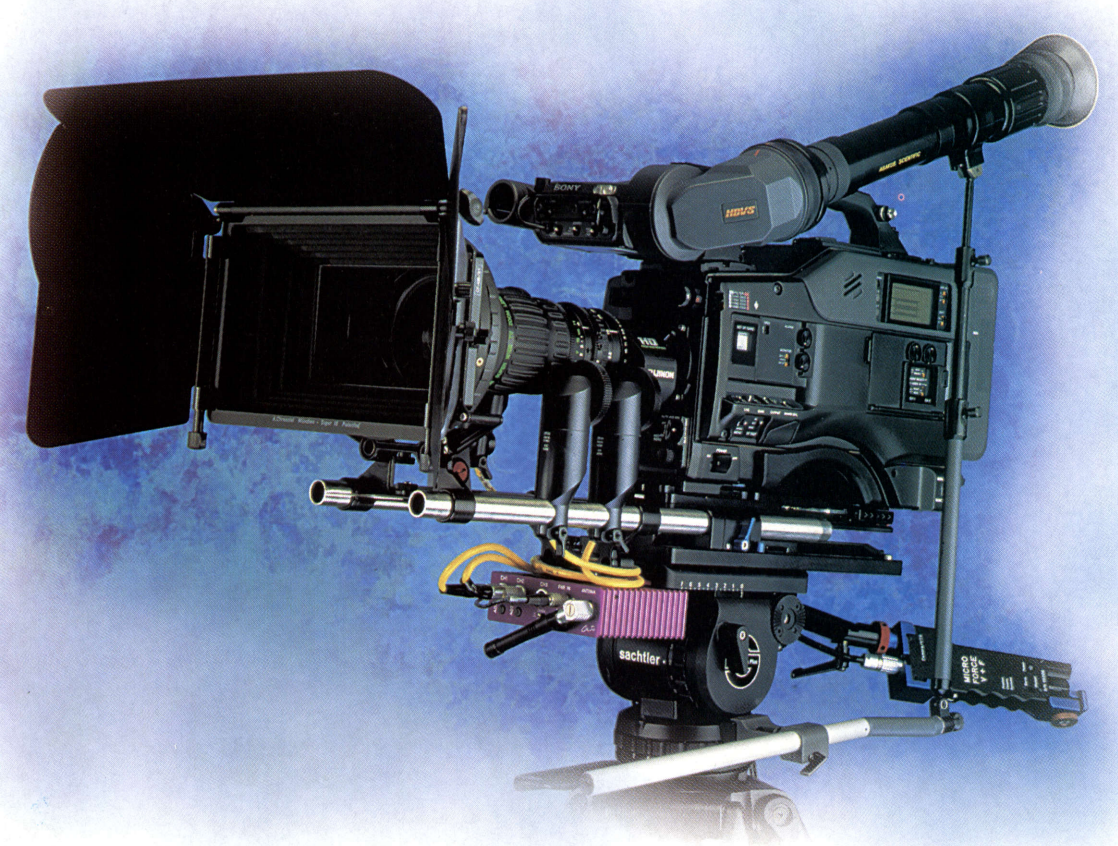
the car we had 15' cyc-strips controlled by dimmers that we 'chased' in series past the car, as if streetlights were passing by overhead. It's always nice when you can automate and streamline the lighting so that things can be timed out and controlled interactively. It's much less random than a guy waving a flag or panning a light. In the case of the cyc-strips overhead, we actually had the lights in a hard-to-reach area over a raining set. We didn't have to have an electrician on a ladder trying to animate the light.

"The cyc-strips had 250-watt globes in them, which could be brought up and turned off reasonably quickly," Miranda continues. "So when the light chased by, it looked like one continuous streetlight source moving past. We continued that light at the end with a 2K, which we controlled with a scroller. Again, the scrollers were a bit more elegant than moving flags in front of the light. The scrollers, which are fairly primitive devices, had a blackout, a clear section and then another blackout at the end of a roll. After the cycs chased by overhead, the scroller would do a wipeout in front of the 2K and then reset. Between the projectors doing their water-rippling effects, the cyc-strips chasing and the physical rain effects, it was quite convincing."

While looking for his next big-screen project, Cronenweth will continue to shoot music videos and commercials. Commenting on the path he took to his first feature film, he relates, "I knew that both John Schartzman and Robert Brinkmann had started shooting documentaries, industrials and whatnot right out of film school, while I was a camera assistant working my way up the ladder in a more traditional sense. Even though I wasn't shooting, I was working on $30 million and $40 million pictures. Interestingly enough, we all sort of arrived at the same place in almost the same amount of time.

"There's always sort of a toss-up between which is the better way to go. Obviously, the sooner you start shooting, the sooner you gain experience that you cannot get as an assistant. But, at the same time, how does someone who has done documentaries, industrials or even music videos deal with the scope of a $60 million film? I suppose it ultimately depends upon what your goals are and how you want to achieve those goals. Is it important to you to gain the knowledge that you get working up the system, or are you anxious to get in there and do it yourself?" ■



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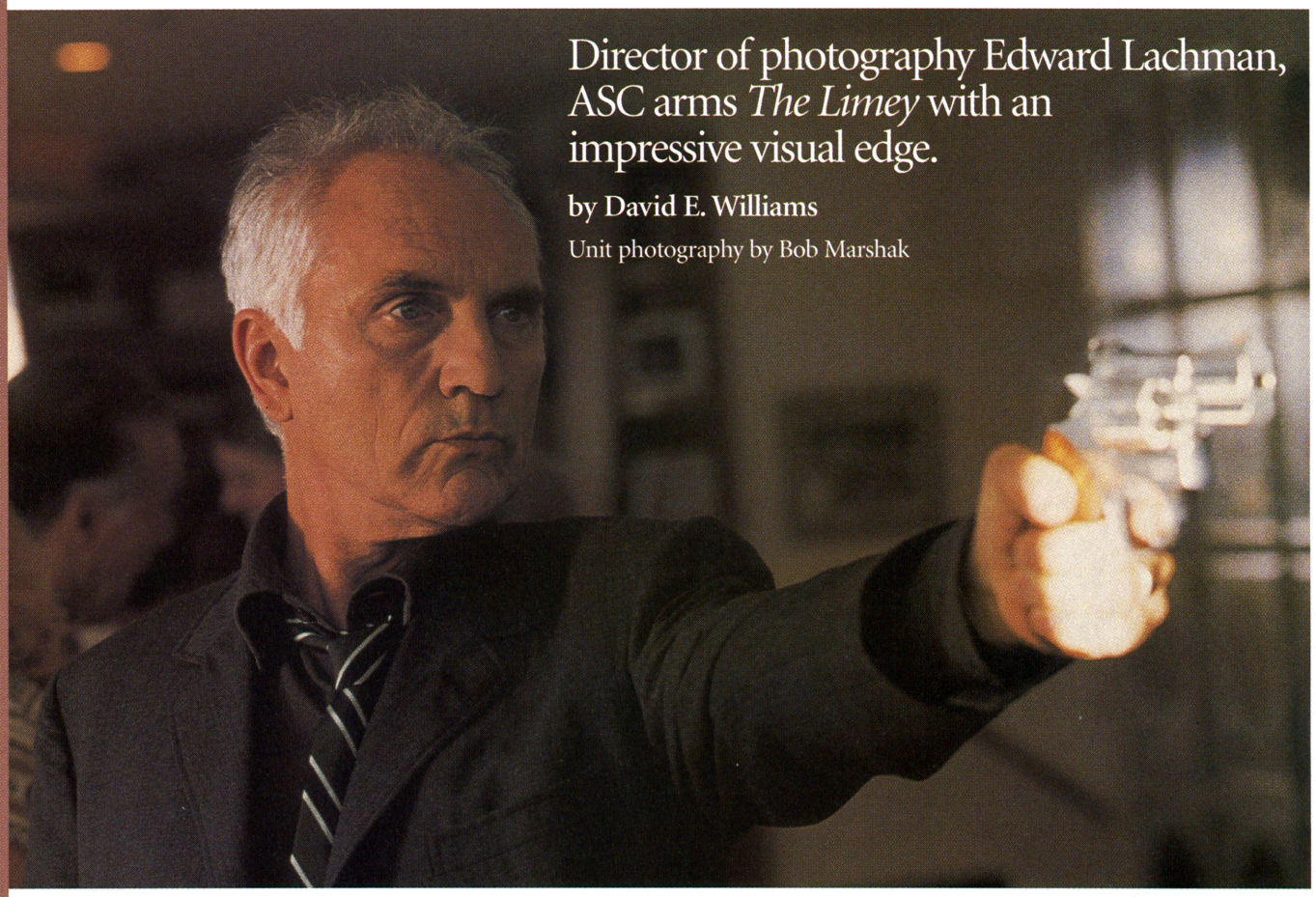


Director of photography Edward Lachman, ASC arms *The Limey* with an impressive visual edge.

by David E. Williams

Unit photography by Bob Marshak

In *The Limey*, a British career criminal named Wilson (Terence Stamp) arrives in Los Angeles to avenge the mysterious death of his daughter, Jenny (Melissa George). Recently released from his latest stint in prison, this no-nonsense bloke has few leads, but quickly finds trouble in the form of a drug-money-laundering operation fronted by corrupt recording impresario Terry Valentine (Peter Fonda), who was romancing Jenny at the time of her demise. Immediately unwelcome, Wilson is met with plenty of grievous bodily injury at the hands of Valentine's bodyguards — but doles out his own brand of brutal vengeance when necessary.

Written by Lem Dobbs (*Kafka*) and directed by Steven Soderbergh (*sex, lies and videotape; Kafka; Out of Sight*), *The Limey* is a vivid piece of pulp fiction that features an inventive non-linear storytelling approach and expert cinematography by Edward Lachman, ASC.

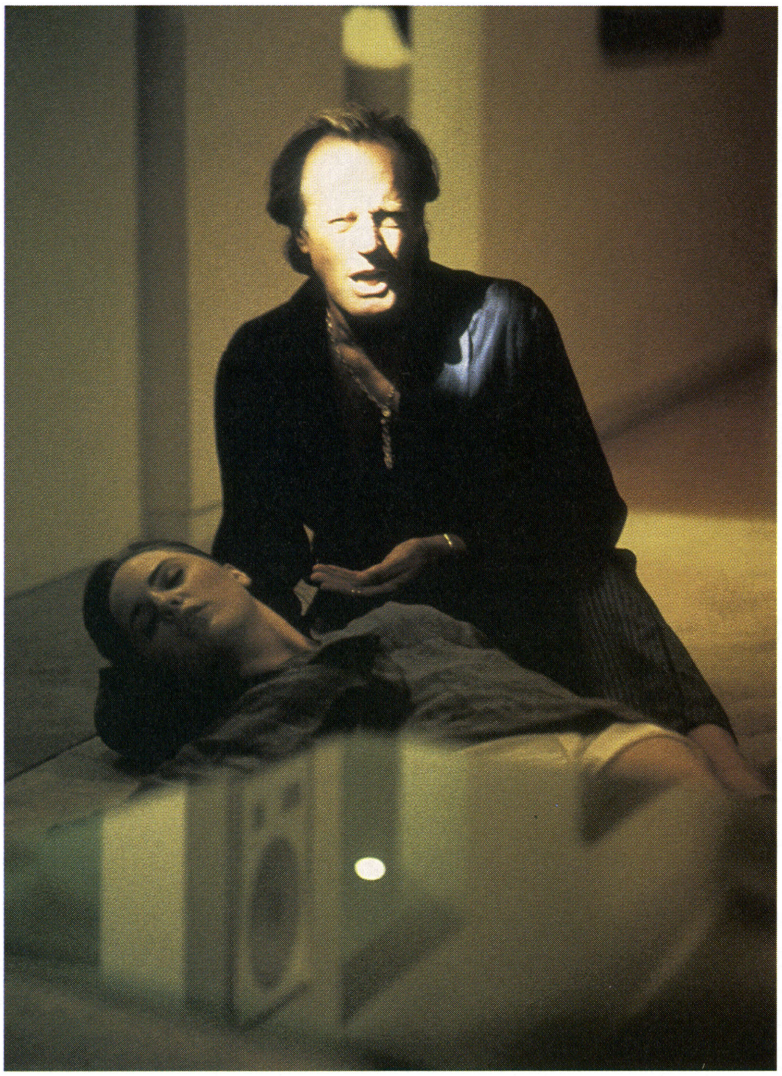
Lachman studied fine art in Paris, and learned his craft while doing documentary and feature work with such directors as Jean-Luc Godard, Werner Herzog and Wim Wenders, and later assisted and operated for such cameramen as Sven Nykvist, ASC, Vittorio Storaro, ASC,

Photos courtesy of Artisan Entertainment.

AIC and Robby Müller, NSC.

Based in New York City for the early part of his career, Lachman compiled a diverse list of feature credits, including *The Lords of Flatbush, Union City, Desperately Seeking Susan* (see *AC* July 1985), *True Stories* (which earned him an Independent Spirit Award nomination), *Less Than Zero, Making Mr. Right, Mississippi Masala, Light Sleeper* (another Spirit Award nomination), *London Kills Me, My New Gun, Touch, Mi Familia, Selena* (*AC* May '97) and *Why Do Fools Fall in Love?*. The cinematographer recently completed the Universal Pictures drama *Erin Brockovich*, also directed by Soderbergh, which stars Albert Finney and Julia Roberts.

Introducing *The Limey* for a packed cast-and-crew screening held at the DGA Theater last March, Soderbergh described the picture as "one of the fastest films I've made, and one of my best experiences." Asked how the speed of the production impacted his contribution to the film, Lachman replies, "Principal photography took about 32 days. Again, when you're forced into certain shooting situations — such as sometimes using just available light — you have to cover the action in a more expedient way. We often shot with two cameras, shooting in one direction and then quickly moving into another. I'd done that before, on *London Kills Me* and parts of *Selena*, and I think it helps the energy for the acting. In this case, it gave Steven more freedom to deal with the actors, because the performances dictated what the cameras were doing, instead of the other way around. Working that way also gave the actors much more of a feeling of performing in real time and with each other, because the action wasn't being cut up into so many pieces. It also helped keep up the momentum of shooting, because we could cover two angles from each direction with each take, which helped matching in the editing process, especially when there was any improvisation.



Opposite: The vengeful Wilson (Terence Stamp) takes aim. The careful placement of hot spots and highlights throughout *The Limey* succinctly punctuates the emotional tenor of each scene. This page: Valentine (Peter Fonda) cradles a young victim of his crimes, as the lighting turns his face into a mask of grief.

"The hardest part of shooting that way is keeping focus, so I had the camera assistant use a sort of 'zone' system in which we laid out a series marks around the area where the actors would be, rather than setting specific marks for them to hit."

The cinematographer notes, "Although he had full backing from Artisan Entertainment, Steven wanted to keep *The Limey* within the realm of a smaller-sized independent film. We studied and discussed how independent films from both Europe and the U.S. were made in the 1970s, [focusing on films] such as Bob Rafelson's *Five Easy Pieces*.

"What we found was a much more freewheeling, pick-up-the-camera-and-shoot feel, which contributed to our shooting in a much looser way. About 80 to 90 percent of *The Limey* was done handheld, even though one may not always notice that it is handheld. Only about five percent or less was done with a tripod. If the camera could instead be put on a table or chair, we'd do that. We made a series of these pads we called 'Tootsie rolls,' using rolled-up sound blankets to cushion and position the camera on these surfaces. We even used them to pan the camera sometimes, just sliding them along a flat surface."

Lachman used Moviecam Compacts on *The Limey*, generally fitted with his personal set of Series II

Mad-Dog Englishman

RIght: The exterior of Valentine's seaside mansion at Big Sur was lit with HMI balloons, casting an extreme blue that contrasts with the home's warm interior (created with firelight effects). Below: Making plans in a seedy bar, a pair of hitmen are assigned to dispose of Wilson. The extreme colors of the sources found on location formed the basis for the lighting, and were then amplified.

and III Cooke Speed Panchro primes. "Those lenses were made 30 years ago, which contributed to the look of the film," the cinematographer attests. "The Cookes don't have the contrast, definition, or multicoatings that a modern lens like a Primo has. They're softer and more forgiving, so we didn't use any diffusion. Steven also liked the lens flares we'd sometimes get with them. At night, though, I'd use Zeiss Superspeeds.

"We did everything possible to demystify the process of shooting, and do without all the equipment, camera gear and lights that many people think they have to have these days. We asked ourselves, 'How can we approach this film if we don't have all those things?' That created another kind of aesthetic that could be applied to the storytelling approach, and it was so successful for us that we shot *Erin Brockovich* the same way — and that was a $55-million studio picture.

"In terms of the crew, I was fortunate to have my preferred team — the same gaffer I always work with, John DeBlau, the same first assistant, Mike Hall, and a very good operator, Ray de la Motte, who was very familiar with how films were shot in the 1970s and innovative about how we could do certain things.

"Steven also cast *The Limey* with icons of the '70s, which is an interesting extension of what we were trying to do with the cinematography. It became thematically intriguing."

Added to this stripped-down production approach was an unconventional narrative style that makes use of both flashbacks and flashforwards, which inform the audience where certain characters are from, and also hint at where they may be going. "We discussed different storytelling styles, and Steven wanted to suggest the characters' interior world," Lachman describes. "Film is able to show locations very easily, while in a novel it may take several paragraphs to describe the place and setting. But it's much more difficult for a filmmaker to enter a character's interior world than it is for a novelist.

"In *Out of Sight*, Steven experimented with this idea by using changes of voice and story perspective, which was something I'd also seen in films by the French director Alain Resnais. In *The Limey*, for instance, we'd shoot the same dialogue scene between Terence Stamp and Leslie Ann Warren in three different locations, and then Steven would cut this footage together as one continuous dialogue. He would then go one step further and run the dialogue over a reaction shot of the character who is supposed to be speaking. That breaks up the traditional narrative flow, and the audience gets an impression of the character's interior world.

"In a sense, the footage we shot was treated almost like 'found' images. This editing plan was something that Steven was thinking about before we began shooting, and we discussed getting the coverage he needed, but it really came together in the editing room. This kind of manipulation of time and space is sometimes done in fantasy films like *The Matrix*, but not often in a real human drama."

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Mad-Dog Englishman

Right: Hiding out in his Hollywood Hills mansion, Valentine begins to crack as Wilson draws ever closer. Below: Operator Ray de la Motte and first assistant Mike Hall work out a shot on location, while director Steven Soderbergh (dark shirt and cap) and cameraman Edward Lachman, ASC (seated) observe.

In one recurring introspective sequence, we see a more youthful Wilson of 30 years ago as he serenades some gals with his guitar at a party. "He's seen as a budding young criminal," Lachman relates with a laugh, explaining that much of this footage was borrowed from the 1967 film *Poor Cow*, a Ken Loach picture about working-class loners in which Stamp starred as a character not coincidentally named Wilson. "I had to match the look of that footage for certain cutaways we needed as flashbacks, consisting of shots of Wilson's daughter as a little girl," Lachman says. "The difficult thing was that we didn't have the footage from *Poor Cow* at that point, and I only saw it on VHS toward the end of our shoot. I therefore had to try to re-create that style based on that reference. I was pleasantly surprised that our footage matched as well as it did when we obtained the dupe negative to make our final print.

"We also needed material to suggest the present-day Wilson's mental image of Jenny and her life leading up to her death, so we had to find a visual way to suggest that concept. What we ended up doing was throwing the shutter out of sync, which creates a vertical streaking effect in the footage, especially with strong highlights.

"I ended up using a strong Krypton-bulb flashlight, which we move across the actors' faces and bodies to help create a creepy, interrogative effect. Clairmont Camera was very helpful in working with us to create the effect we were seeking.

With his nearly impenetrable English accent, the gruff Wilson "is very dislocated and misplaced," Lachman says. "He's never been out of East London, let's say. He's also been in prison for a number of years, so images of him needed to have that sense of being out of place and uncomfortable, and we tried to suggest that with the lighting. For example, in some scenes we'd use very intense lighting in certain areas, forcing Wilson to readjust himself because of the brightness."

One example of this technique is a recurring shot in which the surly character meditates in his seat

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Mad-Dog Englishman

Lachman employed his personal set of Cooke Speed Panchro lenses while shooting *The Limey*, noting that the vintage optics added a suitable look to the film's retro style.

aboard an airliner bringing him to Los Angeles. While shooting on the aircraft interior set, "Steven wanted to continue with our naturalistic style by having the windows burning out and the light pouring in," Lachman says. "To do that, we put an incredible amount of light into a cyc that surrounded the set. We then had a complicated rig, consisting of three 20Ks on a crane arm, that simulated the way sunbeams move around inside a plane interior as the aircraft changes direction. We kept the lighting inside the plane very low, which allowed the cyc to burn out and bleed a bit, and the 20Ks to project these very strong shafts inside at about four stops over key. Then, specifically on Terence Stamp, I bounced a 6K Par into a mirror and though his window to further burn out the left side of his face. That way, the light became an intrusion on him." This pattern is repeated throughout the film, as the pasty Wilson visibly cringes from sunshine and bright sources.

The Limey trails Wilson though a spectrum of Southern California milieus, from the barrios of East L.A. and faceless suburbs of the San Fernando Valley to opulent mansions atop the smog-enshrouded Hollywood Hills and the majestic seaside cliffs of Big Sur. "Almost the entire film was shot on location," notes Lachman, who adds that this approach directly influenced both his lighting plans and execution. "We weren't trying to control the exteriors as much as I usually would, and we'd always try to continue with whatever lighting we found on the locations. For instance, in a fluorescent situation, we'd just light with fluorescents, and sometimes even add Plus Green or Full Green gel to them to make sure they looked like fluorescents."

In one extended nighttime exterior scene, Wilson pays a call on his daughter's friend Ed (Luis Guzman), who had notified him of Jennifer's death. Seeking answers, Wilson also gains Ed's confidence, and the unlikely pair begin their investigation. "In that scene, there's this particular two-shot in which you can see the entire downtown cityscape of Los Angeles lit up in the background," Lachman says. "When you work off of whatever light exists — and we were shooting wide open at T1.4 — you can get an interesting sense of depth, because sources far in the distance aren't being overpowered. If you start shooting at T2.8 or a 4, you lose those backgrounds, so I always tried to light off of what I found on the location, so our *perceived* set would be much greater than what I could actually light. I know that cameramen like John Seale [ASC, ACS] and Chris Menges [BSC] sometimes do that as well. You can get a very different look when you light that way, and it's not just in

terms of depth of field. You pick up ambient light, color temperatures and subtleties in the shadows that you wouldn't get if you tried to light the entire scene yourself."

Aiding Lachman on this and other nighttime scenes was Kodak's Vision 800T 5289 film stock, which had just been introduced before he began shooting. "I'd done some tests with the 89 and the Vision Premier 2393 print film, and I thought the combination was sensational. It was my standard test, just using a face against a neutral-gray backdrop and bracketing exposures in half-stop increments. And while the 89 is slightly grainier than Vision [500T] 5279, it didn't bother me.

"A lot of people have been questioning the Vision print stocks because they think they're too contrasty, but I think it's just how you use them. I generally light with big, soft sources, so I welcome the contrast, but I suppose it would be more unforgiving for anyone who uses harder light.

"For another scene in which Wilson takes a nighttime cab ride, we literally shot without even being able read my meter because there was so little light. Just before we started shooting, an inverter went out, so we lost the supplemental lighting we'd set up in the cab, but we just decided to go for it. I told Steven, 'Either this will be a reshoot, or it'll look great.' And it did look great. Terence Stamp was in the back seat and I could just barely make out his shape through the viewfinder, but the footage turned out remarkably. I couldn't believe how much information the stock held. Also, where you would normally lose your blacks, because the curve is going into underexposure, the Vision Premier really brought them back.

"In that cab scene, I pushed the 5289 by one stop, but the Vision Premier held the blacks," Lachman adds. "I always underrate my stocks while shooting, though, which

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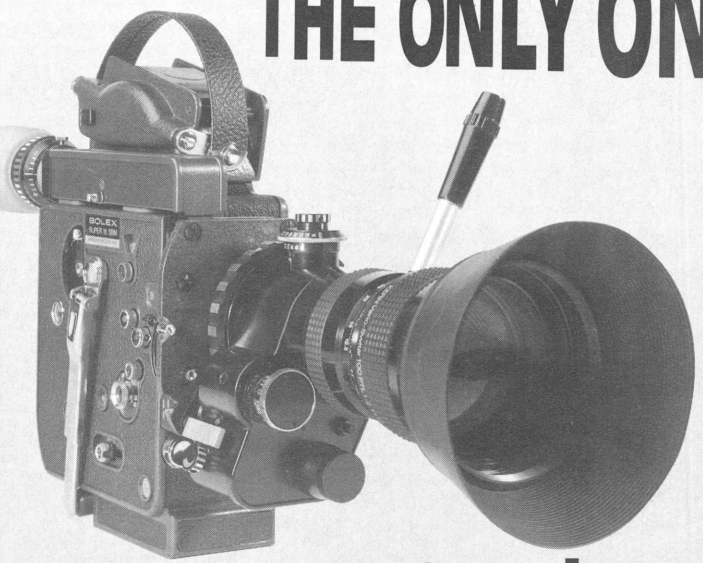

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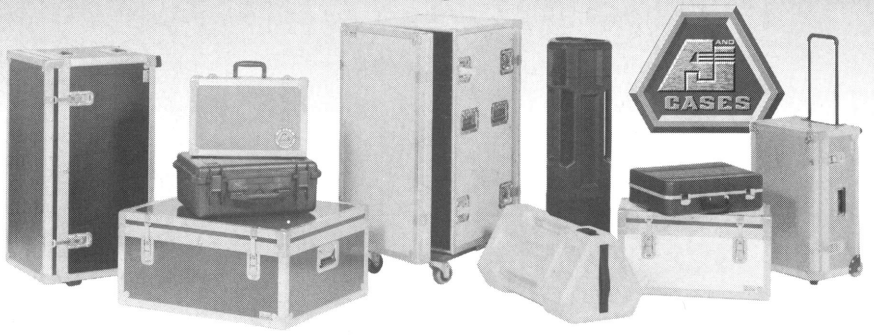

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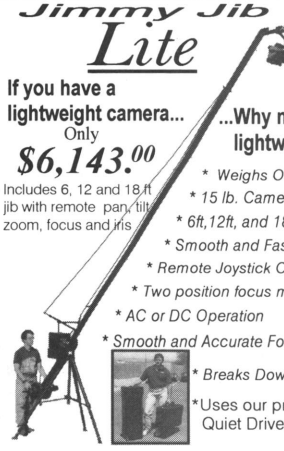

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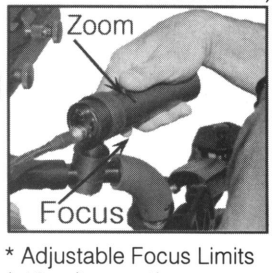

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helped the grain." The cinematographer estimates that he used the 89 on about 20 percent of the film, employing 5279 for interiors and EXR 5293 for daylight exteriors.

Addressing the lab work done on the picture, Lachman details, "Our lab was CFI, my lab of preference, and we worked with Art Tostado and Ron Scott over there. They have good, consistent dailies, and they aren't afraid to reprint something if they feel it doesn't look right. Because of the expense, some other labs won't do that, and they'll send something on even if one roll doesn't match the previous one because the printer lights have somehow been changed. All of the labs are technically about equal, so what it comes down to is customer service.

"Unfortunately, on both *The Limey* and my previous picture, *The Virgin Suicides*, which was directed by Sofia Coppola, we only printed selected takes or rolls in order to save money. I can't stress enough that I feel it's a false 'savings.' Some people think its a luxury or reward for a cameraman to see dailies on film — and maybe there is a secondary sense of pleasure about it — but if you're having any technical problems, you're not going to see it in video dailies. I have yet to be on a film where a lens didn't perform improperly at some point, or a light didn't have an inadvertent change in color temperature that affected a shot. On *The Limey*, we caught a lens that went out on us. The act of moving around day in and day out can damage or affect the cameras and lenses, and those nuances can't be seen on video dailies — the sharpness, contrast or even steadiness of the image. If you're spending $2 million — or even $50 million — on a picture, you can't find yourself in postproduction with shots that are ruined by technical problems. It's much more expensive to go back and reshoot rather than have projected dailies and make sure that any prob-

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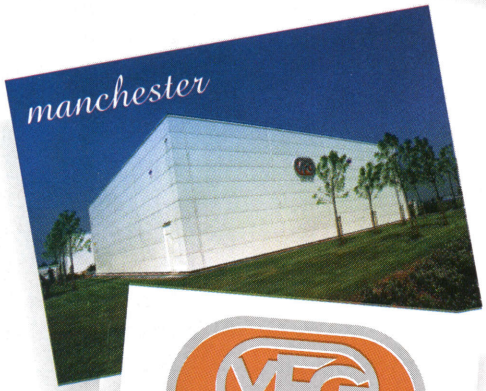

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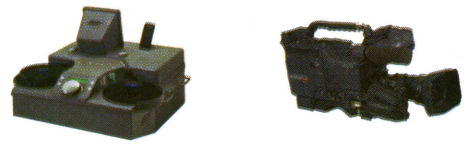

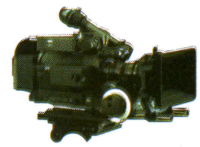

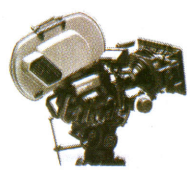

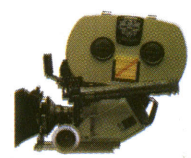

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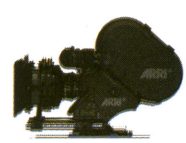

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Mad-Dog Englishman

lems are corrected during principal photography. It's a ludicrous attempt to save money, and I've talked to a number of cameramen who have had major photographic problems on their films but only found out about them after the fact. All cinematographers — and producers and directors — should address this issue. Everyone's concerned about the need for film preservation, but let's get things on film correctly first, and *then* preserve it."

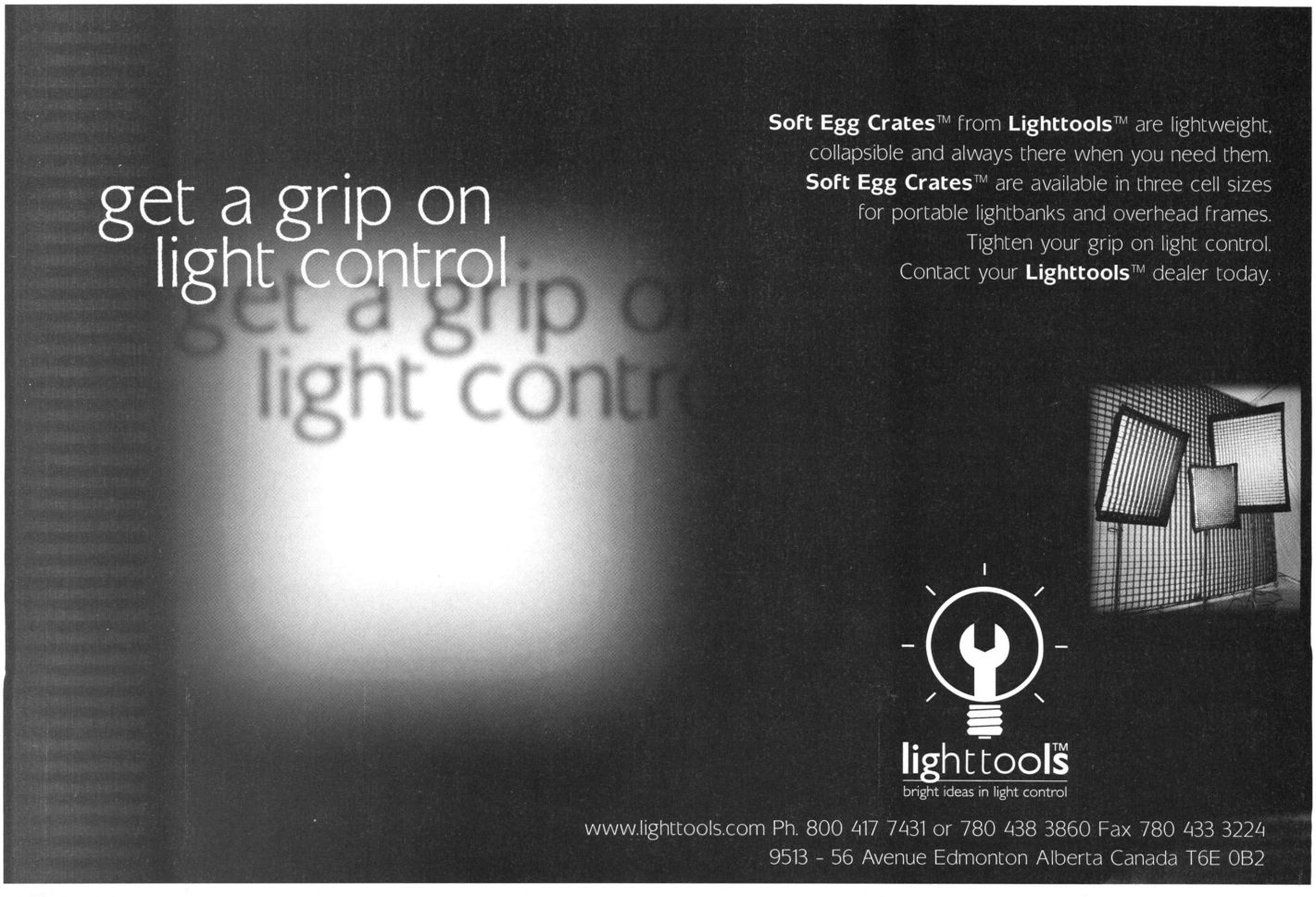
Lachman lit Valentine's modernist mansion in the Hollywood Hills primarily with augmented sunlight, using 18K HMIs coming through the windows: "I mixed the temperatures in there, using straight tungstens on practicals inside so they'd be warmer than the exterior windows. However, because the windows were so burned out, we almost completely lost their color."

During a daytime party sequence staged there, Wilson and Ed loiter outside on a narrow platform jutting over the edge of the hillside, waiting for a chance to confront Valentine. In one panoramic shot, the pair look out over smog-choked Los Angeles, incredulous that anyone would pay for such a view. "That's Steven's favorite shot," Lachman says. "Here's someone who has built a multimillion-dollar house to see just… *whiteness*. You know L.A. is out there somewhere, but there's nothing to see.

"One problem with filming up in the hills is logistical: how do you get the crew and equipment up there and parked? While shooting in the house, there was no place to put the equipment, because we were filming so much of the area. Of course, you also have to deal with the neighborhood. I find it ironic that Hollywood is one of the worst places in the world to shoot a movie on location — nobody wants to be next door to a production, because I guess that's what *they* do at work all day.

"That said, our location house had all of these great windows that were terrific sources for light, allowing us to basically work off what was there. The interior was also primarily white, so that helped us as well."

At Valentine's mansion in Big Sur, Soderbergh wanted to stage a climactic chase scene between Wilson and Valentine on the shore below some steep cliffs, an area that was basically inaccessible for standard filmmaking gear. "The solution was to build a cable system in order to fly some HMI lighting balloons over the area, so we could view the sea, the cliffs and this house," Lachman details, noting that he'd never used such floating fixtures before. "It was a real process. The major problem was getting these cement stanchions out into the sea,



and then rigging the cables to hold the balloons in place. We didn't know how viable our plan would be because the winds were unpredictable, but we were lucky over the two nights we shot down there.

"Another problem was the tide changes, because we just had this very narrow rocky shoreline, which almost completely disappeared at high tide. After a few takes in any given position, we'd have to move everything because the waterline was changing. The balloons helped us in this regard, because they carried such a broad area that we never had to move them around.

"After this experience, I'm a big fan of using balloons, but there's still something to be said about using Condors. If you want a general light over open space, balloons are great, but [the light] has no direction to it."

Working with production designer Gary Frutkoff, Lachman regularly tried to incorporate lighting into their settings. "At the Big Sur house, we used Malibu lights around the grounds leading into the darkness, and practicals on the house itself," the cameraman offers. "Steven wanted a very stark, cold nighttime world outside, which was provided by our HMI balloons. The house interior is very warm, in part because you see so much wood — beautiful teak and cedar — and it was predominately lit by a fireplace for most scenes." The fireplace was already rigged for gas, and the illumination was boosted with the used of small lamps on flicker generators.

Considering the artfully down-and-dirty style he used to shoot *The Limey*, Lachman offers, "It's interesting to watch the trends in cinematography, and it seems that the pendulum has been swinging away from the direction of creating cosmetically 'perfect' images. Film stocks are so grainless and wonderful, and lenses are so pristine and sharp, that I feel we need to go back a bit in the direction of feeling that something is 'real,' so that we're not manufacturing some homogenized abstraction of reality.

"Steven understood that if we were going to approach the storytelling, these were the kinds of images we'd find. It excited him to explore different ways of telling the story of *The Limey* photographically. If you're going to investigate this low-rent, underbelly world, why not use a low-rent means to tell the story? I think audiences want stories about real human emotion and conflict, and moving away from sterile technical perfection can help on those kinds of films." ■

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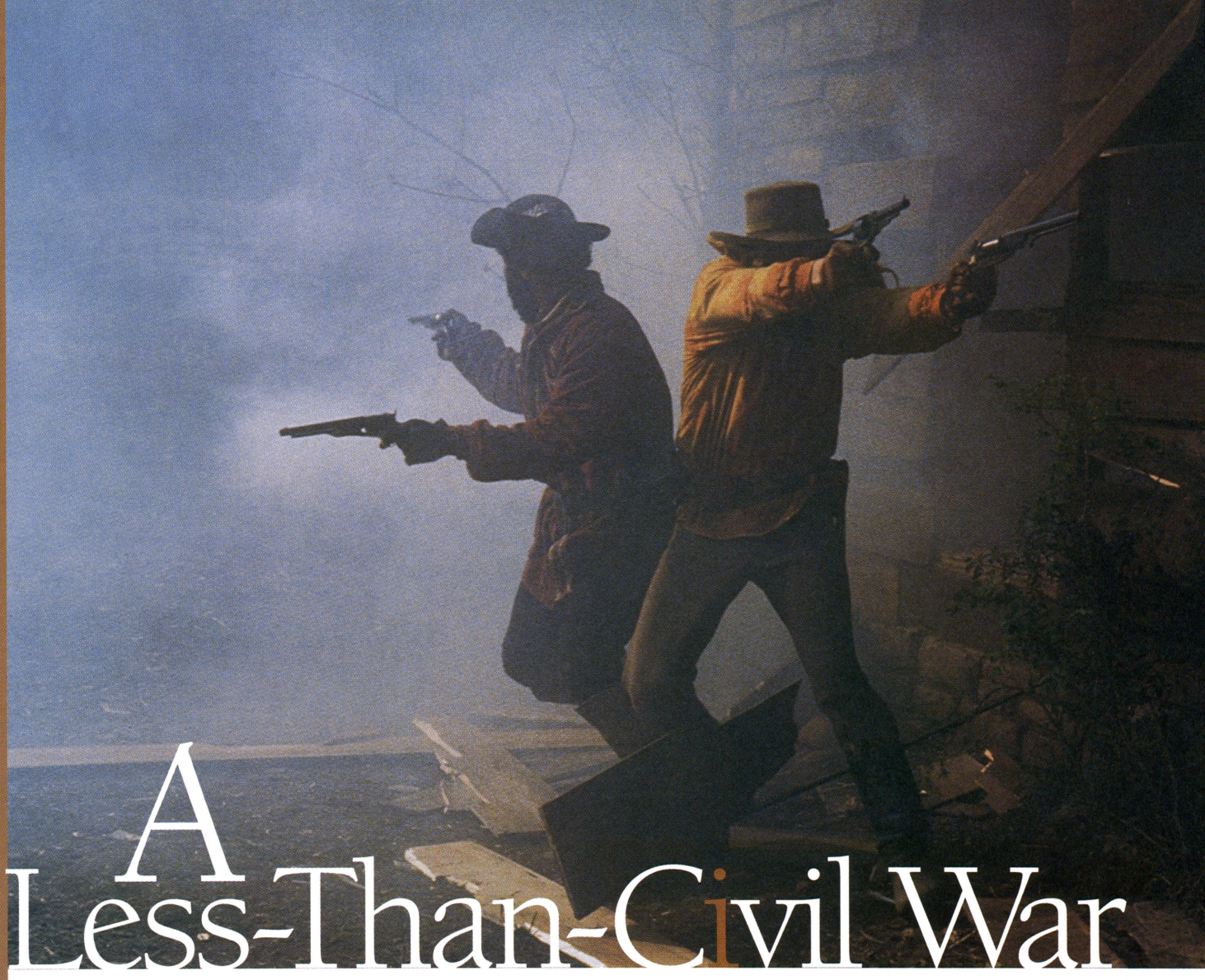

A Less-Than-Civil War

Cinematographer Frederick Elmes, ASC creates an authentic period mood for the Ang Lee drama *Ride With the Devil.*

by Douglas Bankston

Unit photography by John Clifford

For the United States, 1861 was a year of division. An entire nation was plunged into a brutal Civil War that turned Federal North against Confederate South, state against neighboring state, and brother against brother. While organized military campaigns were fought hundreds of miles away in the East, along the Kansas-Missouri border on the edge of the wild West, a loose band of Southerners known as Bushwhackers were conducting guerrilla warfare against patrolling Federal Jayhawkers.

In Ang Lee's latest film, *Ride With the Devil,* childhood friends Jake Roedel (Tobey Maguire), the son of a Federal-siding German immigrant, and Jack Bull Chiles (Skeet Ulrich), the son of a Missouri plantation owner, join the Bushwhackers and fight alongside a wealthy Southern aristocrat, George Clyde (Simon Baker), and his loyal former slave, Daniel Holt (Jeffrey Wright). Despite their Bushwhacker credentials, both Roedel and Holt are considered outsiders — not true sons of the South — and unite in a kinship of sorts while earning the bloodlusting ire of Pitt Mackeson (Jonathan Rhys Meyers).

Adapted for the screen by producer James Schamus from Daniel Woodrell's book *Woe to Live On*, the film recounts the devastating effects the war has on the Southern supporters as they come to grips with the reality that the Confederacy will lose. The thrill of battle fades into a fight for survival.

Director Ang Lee and cinematographer Frederick Elmes, ASC, had previously collaborated on another period film, *The Ice Storm* (see *AC* Oct. '97), which dealt with dysfunctional American families struggling with existential angst

Photos courtesy of Universal Studios.

during the 1970s. They enjoyed the experience so much that they reteamed for *Ride With the Devil*. "I fell in love with the script and the book because it's a slice of American life that people don't know much about," enthuses Elmes, whose credits include *Eraserhead*, *Blue Velvet* (see *AC* Nov. '86) and *Wild at Heart*. "This story really grabs you and draws you into the war from a Southern point of view."

With its sweeping vistas and intense battle scenes, *Devil* is a much larger-scale film than *The Ice Storm*, but shares that picture's focus on humanity. However, Elmes reveals that Lee's vision for the project evolved considerably from conception to execution. "In the beginning, Ang said he was going to make a war film," the cinematographer notes. "He ended up making a relationship film. It's about dealing with the demise of Southern culture — how the North takes over the South, and how that affects the individual characters' lives. Ang has a real sensitivity to stories about people in universal situations. He can zero in on that."

To capture the visual style of *Ride With the Devil*, Elmes immersed himself in the era through drawings and lithographs, as well as photos taken by renowned Civil War photographer Matthew Brady. The work of Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershoi also caught the filmmakers' attention. "The paintings we looked at were of interior day rooms — plain, very stark, and quite devoid of color with naturalistic light coming mostly from window or doorways," Elmes says. "We used those as signposts, as little markers along the way." This approach lent a realistic yet polished look to the film. "In the beginning, Ang and I discussed letting some parts get rough, but keeping a natural, smooth and finished feeling overall. We felt that it shouldn't be a documentary sort of film, that it shouldn't feel underexposed."

Lee and Elmes were able to view their dailies in a makeshift screening room on location. The cameraman maintains, "That was very important to me as well to as Ang, to see what we were getting on film." Dailies were developed by DuArt in New York, while DeLuxe in Los Angeles handled the answer prints and release prints. "I worked with Phil Hetos [at Deluxe] — a fabulous timer whom I like a lot," the cinematographer says. "He is following the picture through all the way to the check print."

The lack of electricity during the Civil War period allowed Elmes to explore the use of firelight extensively. He offers, "We were dealing with a world where people lived by natural light for the most part; as nighttime approached, they created comfort with candles and lanterns. For me, that presented a continual battle between the manmade light and what nature gave us."

Shot on location in Kansas and Missouri over an 81-day schedule, *Ride With the Devil* presented Elmes with many tribulations, but a lack of prep was not among them. On *The Ice Storm*, he had a very short prep period, but this time around he had six weeks to conduct numerous exposure and contrast tests, and to examine the actors' costumes and hairstyles. "We did candlelight tests to determine the color of the light and the intensity — if it should be a little flicker or a lot of flicker," Elmes notes. "It was new and different stuff for me, and I enjoyed that."

Elmes also had to help Lee familiarize himself with the anamor-

Opposite: Bushwhackers Daniel Holt (Jeffrey Wright) and Jake Roedel (Tobey Maguire) blast their way out of a burning farmhouse. Left: The unstable, malevolent Pitt Mackeson (Jonathan Rhys Meyers, at left) confronts Roedel. Elmes details, "I had decided that even though the scene was going to be contrasty, the firelight should be soft. We ran three channels of flickering lights through a big piece of diffusion with various warm-colored gels, and a fourth channel was usually run by a person on a dimmer control, so there was always a kind of random human element to the flicker." Below: A crewmember checks the frame as Elmes takes a light reading. "I would often prefer to set up a big white bounce to augment the lighting rather than try to do it with lights," Elmes says. "It looks better to me."

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A Less-Than-Civil War

Jack Bull Chiles (Skeet Ulrich) enjoys a dugout visit from the widow Sue Lee (Jewel). The claustrophobic cave was lit using natural-looking light streaming through either the open door or holes in the rough-hewn wood.

phic format. "This was Ang's first anamorphic film," the cameraman points out, "so he was learning about the size and shape of the frame. It was his choice to shoot in anamorphic, and I was very supportive because I like the format a lot, and I felt that the scope of the film lent itself to it. I think widescreen can be very intimate as well, because you can hold two faces in an anamorphic frame better than you can in 1.85:1."

Moviecam Compacts, fitted with Joe Dunton's JDC 2.35 Research anamorphic lenses, were used for most of the show. "We found that the lenses looked best between a T2.8 and a 4," Elmes specifies. "That brought out the quality that Ang and I liked in terms of sharpness and overall feeling." Both daytime and nighttime interiors, along with most exteriors, were lit to that stop range.

Throughout shooting, Elmes adorned his lens with a net made of a fine material he had found at a local fabric store. "I found the JDC lenses to be just a bit too sharp, so I wanted to take a little bit of that edge off."

For handheld and Steadicam shots, Elmes switched to a lightweight Moviecam SL, which he found to have "a great anamorphic viewfinder." He adds, "The groundglass on a viewfinder generally has crosshairs in the middle of the frame, so I usually have those removed. That eliminates the temptation of using them as a marker for anything, or a reference for dividing things in half." He credits camera/Steadicam operator Tom Lohmann for finding that good dividing line on his own. "Tom is a great operator, and he brought a lot to the film. There were times when Ang and I had figured out a dolly move, and it wasn't quite working because we couldn't get the timing right. It was always Tom who could fix it. He knew just where we should be and what the camera had to do to make it better."

The cinematographer benefitted from the efforts of first assistant Chris Goss, second assistant Roger Branit and dolly grip Darrell Sheldon, as well as the work of Peter Fernberger, who provided additional photography.

Most day exteriors were shot using Kodak EXR 5248 and a Harrison & Harrison 85B filter, which Elmes prefers for the quality it lends to skin tones. When he needed more exposure for heavily tree-shaded exteriors and day and night interiors, he employed Eastman's Vision 200T 5274. "The 200T allows you enough range to use the shade effectively," he explains. "I like the

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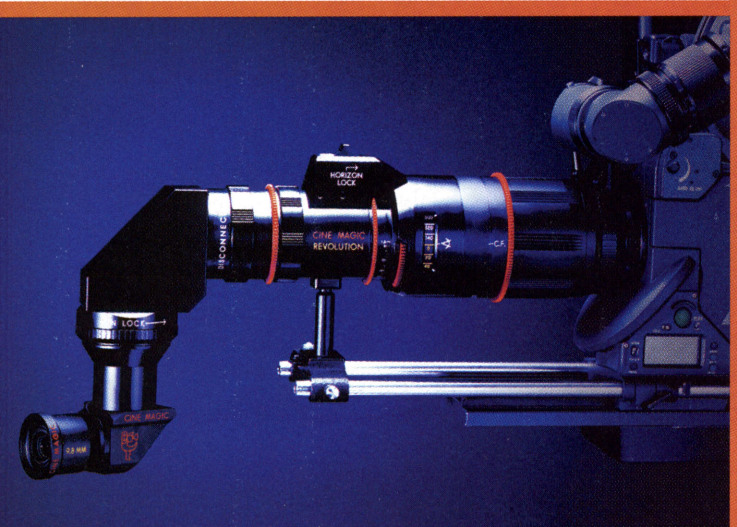

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A Less-Than-Civil War

finer grain because I think it looks better on the screen, and I wanted the image to be smoother for this film."

Lee's shot selection lent a third-party, almost observational feel to the camerawork. "That's the way Ang saw the story," Elmes states. "He likes to have a good sense of the geography in a scene. Hand in hand with that, he likes the sense of the camera sitting back and watching the scene. His feeling is that the camera shouldn't move subjectively."

Further enhancing the camera's observational approach are the noticeably smooth tracking shots used during several horseback action sequences. The film's opening finds Jake Roedel racing on his steed across a field in order to attend a wedding. In that instance, a nearby dirt road offered Elmes the rare luxury of using a camera car. To compensate for the bumpy trail, a Steadicam was employed to absorb most of the jolts. "We found that we could easily use a 75mm, 100mm or 150mm lens to shoot a close-up of a rider with the camera car trucking alongside, as long as the Steadicam was part of the system," the cameraman recalls. "The Steadicam proved to be a very good rig, and Tom Lohmann is very good at using it."

The tight confines of the woods, however, required a different technique. "We'd try to find locations that had a pathway nearby, so we could build a dolly track and just push the camera along really fast for a short run. If you're clever, you can shoot one scene off one side of the dolly and then turn the camera around and do the same dolly move while shooting in the opposite direction, because you have great woods on the other side as well."

In one hectic scene, Roedel, Chiles, Clyde and Holt are trapped inside a burning farmhouse by Federal troops, and a violent firefight ensues. Inside the house, "we had a couple of handheld cameras running simultaneously, and we lit the inte-

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BY SUE MASTERMAN

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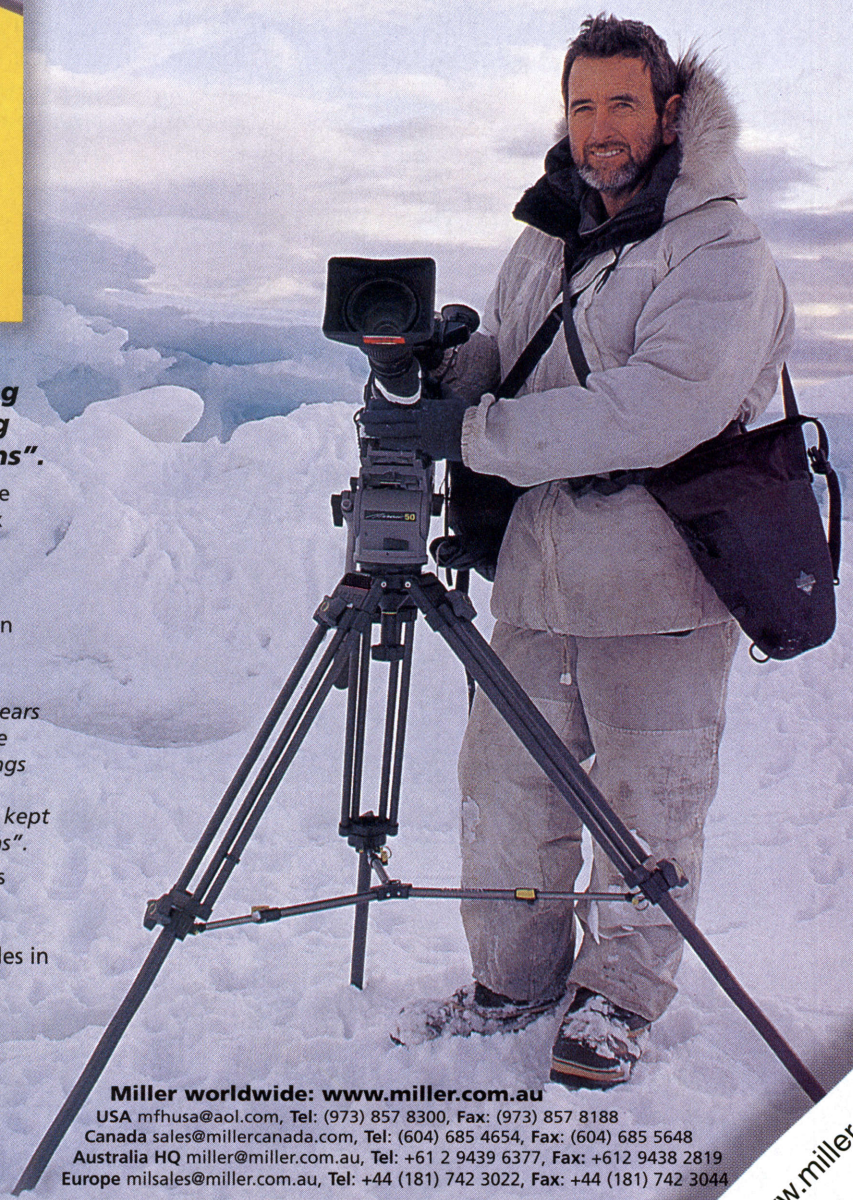

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A Less-Than-Civil War

Roedel reads to Holt from a captured Federal letter in the dugout at night. Firelight was created using small bulb boards fabricated from pieces of plywood, each fitted with nine sockets and different-sized tungsten bulbs connected to flicker boxes. Diffusion and colored gels were hung on the front of the boards. Elmes explains, "Because the bulbs were spread out, it made the shadows move on people's faces."

rior mainly with what was coming through the windows," Elmes says, noting that he did augment the look a bit with some hard HMI Pars. "If a character dodged out of the window light to avoid the bullets, he'd go black and just disappear, and then burn out a bit when he came into the light again."

For the film's many nighttime scenes, Elmes had to create a realistic style of firelight that could cover very large areas and still maintain the T-stop range that he and Lee preferred. To gain more exposure for these night exteriors, he switched to Kodak Vision 500T 5279. One large area he had to contend with was the Bushwhacker encampment. "Gaffer Jonathan Lumley and I tested some flicker-box systems to create 'fire-light,'" Elmes details. "In most of the campfire scenes, we would use 2K lamps, like three or four 2K lamps with some gel on them, sometimes down on the dimmers a little bit to warm them up even more. With diffusion, it would make a source that was four by eight feet. I could put it 15 or 20 feet away, and it would give me the quality of light I wanted. Also, because the source was big, it would give me the flickering I wanted. It was just a matter of moving it around so that it worked on the actors' faces most effectively — in addition to having some sort of real fire in the shot. You had to have some sense of real flames and smoke in the foreground to make it convincing. It also helped to have six

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other fires going on in the distance; they could be lighting five people in one spot, a tree in another and two tents nearby. That would give me control over the background."

The encampment was ringed with electrical cable, so that Elmes could tap in and light anywhere along the line. Because of the jagged terrain, generators could not be brought too close.

Allowing the actors' faces to go dark added to the realism of the scene. "Ang is very good about judging that," Elmes maintains. "I'd find myself saying, 'Are you sure you don't want to see their eyes a little better?' He'd reply, 'No, we're okay here.' We'd go back and forth on what was too dark and what wasn't. A little bit of light in the actors' eyes is great, particularly if it's flickering light. It looks fabulous. We designed a little tungsten light with a snoot on it just to reach in and get the eyes."

The vengeful Bushwhackers level Lawrence. Standing in for the Kansas settlement was the old town of Pattonsburg, Missouri, which was virtually empty and scheduled to be razed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency following a devastating flood.

With a harsh winter looming ahead, the Bushwhackers scatter throughout the countryside to hide and find shelter. Roedel, Chiles, Clyde and Holt group together inside a cavelike dugout carved into a hillside near the home of Mr. Evans (Zach Grenier), a Confederate sympathizer. The quartet's gloomy existence is brightened by frequent visits from Evans's daughter-in-law, Sue Lee Shelley (Jewel), a widow whose husband was killed in battle just two weeks after their marriage.

The dugout consisted of a claustrophobic, tunnel-like set built

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A Less-Than-Civil War

in a local warehouse by production designer (and fellow *Ice Storm* alum) Mark Friedberg. "Mark was always there and always very inclusive," the cinematographer says. "He always asked my opinion on things."

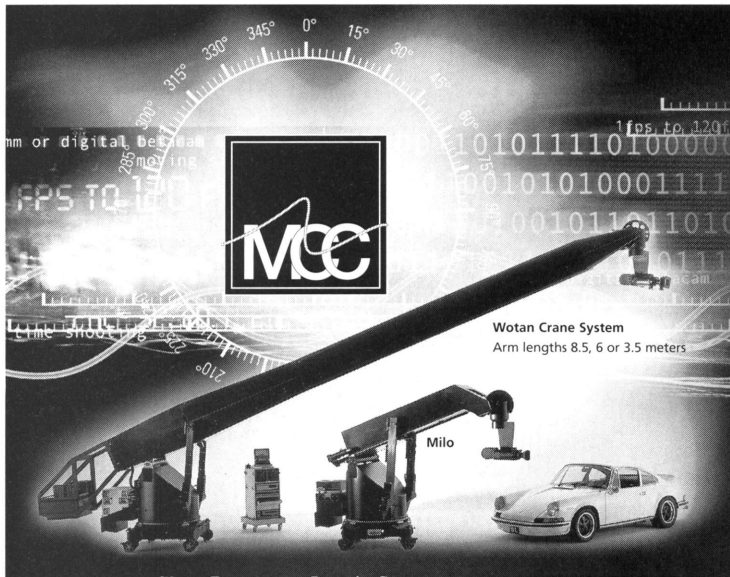
Projecting sufficient daylight into the dugout for proper exposure often required taking out a section of wall. "I usually used a 20K tungsten light through a 12' by 12' frame of light gridcloth, placed about 25' from the set to create a soft daylight ambience," Elmes reveals.

To maintain a more natural look, fill light was kept to a minimum. Elmes explains, "Fill light makes up for the difference between what my eye sees compared to what the film sees, so I usually use just the littlest bit, although it's important that it be there."

The only light illuminating the cave at night came from the fireplace or an occasional lantern. "In the wider shots, we would burn a fire in there and then hide lights on one side or the other of the actual fire," he states. "The biggest problem of shooting in the dugout was that while it was easy to light the actors' faces when they were near the fire, the dark-gray, clay earth of the dugout wall three feet behind them disappeared completely. I continually found myself having to light just the back wall, otherwise you wouldn't see all that texture back there — the rocks, roots and leaves. I wanted to see that flickering light on the wall because it added to the claustrophobic quality of the space."

To mimic firelight at night in the dugout, gaffer Jonathan Lumley built 2' x 2' and 3' x 3' bulb boards, using pieces of plywood mounted with nine sockets and then fitted with different-sized tungsten bulbs running on flicker generators. Diffusion and warm gels were then hung on the front of the boards, which were often trained on the actors from underneath and within the fireplace (in place of actual fire) because of the width of the anamorphic frame. Elmes says that a 50mm provided a good claustrophobic feel, while 75mm and 100mm lenses were used for close-ups.

When the four Bushwhackers discover the Evans house in flames and Mr. Evans murdered by raiding Jayhawkers, they pursue the attackers on horseback through the woods, but stumble right into a Federal ambush. The chase begins at twilight, with the successive shots becoming darker until the four men enter a clearing and find themselves trapped by the enemy. Elmes and Lee wanted the gunfight scene to be dark, without the hard moonlight seen in many films. "The Federal attackers were identified only by their gunshots in the dark woods," Elmes observes.



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The rugged terrain made it difficult to position lights. Tungsten 5Ks and 10Ks were hidden on the surrounding hills just out of frame, while two 20Ks were placed on a lift some distance in the background to provide a subtle backlight on trees and people. Devising the right moonlight source required a bit of ingenuity. With the help of key grip Bob Andres, a 20'-square box was constructed with light gridcloth on all sides, containing 12 Maxi-Brutes which could be controlled from the ground. A large construction crane was used to reach over the treetops and suspend the moonlight box over the clearing. "It was like having a giant balloon light right over the spot where we needed it most, and we could control the height and where it hung pretty well," Elmes remembers. "That gave us a kind of ambiance that showed where everything was without being too specific, and it was soft enough to not cast shadows."

As spring returns, the band of rebels — minus Jack Bull Chiles, who suffers a mortal wound during the ambush — rejoin the Bushwhackers to make a vengeful attack on the town of Lawrence, Kansas. During this real-life event, more than 180 men and boys lost their lives, and the town was burned to the ground.

The action was staged in the old, flood-devastated town of Pattonsburg, Missouri. Government officials agreed to let the filmmakers demolish the town for them — saving millions for both parties. Appropriate facades were placed on some of the newer buildings to create a 360-degree shooting area.

Elmes used five cameras to cover the Lawrence raid sequence. "We used two cameras to cover wider action and then a couple more with longer lenses for more isolated spots," he recollects. "We got very good at hiding cameras in doorways or in broken windows."

The ride out of Lawrence after the bloodbath was smoothly tracked with the help of a dolly on a 150'-long track. The filmmakers combined a broad shot containing over 100 horses and riders with an intimate dialogue sequence.

The shooting schedule for *Ride With the Devil* was spread across three seasons — the end of winter, and then spring and summer — and the constantly-changing weather played a big role. "I think the most challenging part for me was making the most of the weather that we had," Elmes reminisces. "When you're standing in a field watching some beautiful storm clouds unfold, you do your best to stay and put them in the movie, no matter how wet you have to get." ■

Televised Gems

AC profiles the 1999 Emmy Award nominees for Best Cinematography.

by David Heuring

Television cinematography has come a long way in the past few years. Despite recent programming trends toward tabloid television, prime-time TV is graced by high-quality images that boast the kind of subtlety and power previously found only on the big screen.

The common denominator is the cinematographer's ability to tell a story and create a mood with images. Overall, this year's nominees say that the level of quality they can produce has been aided by technological advancements, the assistance of skilled crews, and input from savvy producers who understand the need for impressive images.

What follows is a synopsis of each of the nominated productions, and a brief assessment by the Emmy-nominated cinematographers who made them stand out.

Outstanding Cinematography For A Series

James Bagdonas, ASC
Chicago Hope
"Home Is Where the Heartache Is"

James Bagdonas has earned two Emmy nominations and several ASC Award nominations for his work on the CBS series *Chicago Hope,* as well as a prior Emmy nomination for the MOW *Hidden in America.*

The *Chicago Hope* episode "Home Is Where The Heartache Is" gave Bagdonas and his crew the rare chance to move off their regular sets to outside locations. Sites in Pasadena and Alta Dena, California, stood in for the hometown of character Jack McNeil (Mark Harmon), who returns to the area after his brother dies. McNeil's trip home soon stirs up bleak childhood memories.

The episode begins with a nightmarish flashback sequence in which McNeil and his brother box each other while being egged on by their overbearing father. To lend the sequence a unique feel, Bagdonas used a skip-bleach lab process on the negative. "We wanted a really high color contrast," he says. "We wanted the blacks to blot up and the highlights to kind of go hot. We also mixed in a lot of speed changes."

The boxing sequences take place in the basement of a house, which Bagdonas lit in a somber style. "I played the house with warm

Photos courtesy of Eastman Kodak.

colors, because it is McNeil's home and also because I wanted it to contrast with intercutting scenes set in a hospital," says Bagdonas. "I used very little fill, lighting through the windows and letting [the actors] work the room. I put yellow and straw gels on the basement windows — the opposite of what you would normally put there — and blew them out."

For the funeral sequence, which cuts back and forth with McNeil's other childhood memories, Bagdonas shot in color and overexposed by a stop. "The highlights were almost four stops over," he says. "I incorporated a filter I hadn't used in a long time — a regular fog filter, numbers 1 and 2. I actually went up to number 3 at one time, after I realized we could go a little further."

Bagdonas also used overexposure, changes from color to black-and-white and fog filters to enhance the drama of other childhood memory sequences. "It was a very dramatic episode," says the cameraman. "The material in the practical locations was set off nicely by the other storylines taking place back at the hospital. That helped give us a sense of place."

Another recent episode of *Chicago Hope*, shot in HDTV, was covered in *AC* April '99.

Hugo Cortina
JAG
"Gypsy Eyes"

Hugo Cortina's second Emmy nomination for the CBS series *JAG* recognized his work on the episode "Gypsy Eyes," which earned him his first ASC Award nomination earlier this year (see *AC* May '99). The episode featured extensive location shooting and allowed the cinematographer a broad palette.

Cortina approaches each episode with a new eye. "Depending on the narrative, I'll change the filtration, the lighting and the contrast," he notes. "It varies according to the nature of the script and the locations, as well as the seasons. I try to attack every episode by working from the script itself — how it's written, the meaning that comes out of it, what it is that I'm trying to accomplish in terms of the visual impact. Not all episodes need to be attacked visually. On some of them, I need to be passive — to stand back and let everything happen on its own, and do subtle things to make it look pretty and flowing. With other scripts, I'll read them and say, 'Wow, this has some opportunities for a very graphic photographic experience,' and we can help the story along in that mode."

The second half of a two-part installment, "Gypsy Eyes" follows *JAG* protagonist Navy Lt. Commander Harmon "Harm" Rabb, Jr. (David James Elliott) as he searches for his father. In previous episodes, it was revealed that Rabb's father is missing in action. Rabb's search takes him to Russia, which gave Cortina a cue for his visual design. "I tried to enhance the blacks and make the look as cold as possible," he says. "I shot the exteriors without an 85 filter, and I used a ½ Tiffen white ProMist. To enhance the idea of the environment being cold and dark, we used a lot of negative fill in order to make the shadow side of the actors' faces go dark."

Rabb eventually crashes a hijacked Russian MIG fighter into a dense forest. Subsequent sequences were photographed over the course of several 18-hour days at woody locations near the top of Mount Wilson in the Angeles Forest near Los Angeles. "We had some big night exteriors up there," Cortina recalls. "I silhouetted the actors with a lot of moonlight — uncorrected 4K HMI Pars with some ½ Plus Green — and used a campfire to light their faces. The 4Ks were positioned on the ground, uplighting the trees and backlighting smoke coming from

OUTSTANDING CINEMATOGRAPHY FOR A SERIES

James Bagdonas, ASC
Chicago Hope
"Home Is Where the Heartache Is"

Hugo Cortina
JAG
"Gypsy Eyes"

*** Robert Primes, ASC**
Felicity
"Todd Mulcahy, Part II"

Bill Roe
The X-Files
"The Unnatural"

Dennis Smith
The Practice
"Happily Ever After"

OUTSTANDING CINEMATOGRAPHY FOR A MINISERIES OR MOVIE OF THE WEEK

John Alonzo, ASC
Lansky

*** Robbie Greenberg, ASC**
Winchell

Michael D. O'Shea, ASC
The '60s, "Night 2"

Roland "Ozzie" Smith
Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman: The Movie

Bruce Surtees
Dash and Lilly

*** Denotes Winner**

Opposite page: Thirteen of the 16 Emmy-nominated directors of photography attended the annual Kodak celebratory dinner held on September 27 at the Bistro Gardens restaurant in Studio City, California. Each nominee received a Kodak Vision Award, presented by Brian Spruill, the vice president and general manager of Eastman Kodak Company. From left, standing: Bob Perrin (*The Farm: Inside Angola Prison*), Dennis Smith (*The Practice*), Donald A. Morgan (*Home Improvement*), Samuel Henriques (*The Farm: Inside Angola Prison*), Brian Spruill, Hugo Cortina (*JAG*), James Bagdonas, ASC (*Chicago Hope*), Judith Doherty (Kodak), Bill Roe (*The X-Files*), Michael Zakula, Kathy Mazza and Tim Knapp (of Kodak), Richard Chisolm (*Avalanche: The White Death*). Seated, from left: Roland "Ozzie" Smith (*Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman: The Movie*), Robert Primes, ASC (*Felicity*), John A. Alonzo (*Lansky*), and Michael O'Shea, ASC (*The '60s*).

several big smoke machines.

"We then continued the shoot at some enormous blimp hangars in Tustin, where we had several helicopters landing in front of these immense hangars that were over 200' tall and 1,200' long. We used those as our background pieces."

Robert Primes, ASC
Felicity
"Todd Mulcahy, Part II"

The hit WB series *Felicity*, Robert Primes's third episodic television assignment (after stints on *Quantum Leap* and *thirtysomething*), traces the adventures of a young woman who follows her high school crush to college in New York City (see *AC* Feb. '99 for complete coverage). While working on the show, Primes fashioned a reality-based approach that included almost no filtration. "Almost all of the light was soft, and it was often shining through Chimeras, or frames of 1000H, Chimera cloth, 216, 250 or opal," says Primes, who sometimes augmented the soft light with shafts of harder light slashing through the sets.

Many of the series' scenes are played in close-up. "We tried to light from the floor as much as we could, because lights above or below eye level are better for portraiture," Primes states, adding, "One of the nice things about hard light is that you can really shape it." To cut the his softlight sources, Primes used Chimera's honeycomb grids, which attach to the front of the company's flexible soft boxes to concentrate the light, rather than let it scatter. The grids come angled in 30-, 60- and 90-degree increments. He notes, "In the past, I was using the 60s most of the time, the 90s some of the time, and the 30s not very much."

On *Felicity*, however, gaffer Marshall Adams pushed the grids. "Marshall started using the 30-degree grid, which takes a tremendous amount of light," Primes offers. "You need 10,000 watts to get a soft little spotlight. You can have someone in a little glow, and light nowhere else."

Because of their reliance on Chimeras and soft lighting, Primes and Adams employed very powerful fixtures. "Our smallest Chimeras were fitted with 650W tweenies, while our largest had 20Ks," he notes. Primes also employed a few Kino Flo fixtures, as well as many Source Four ellipsoidal lamps. "The Source Fours are a very hard light; you can bounce them into a card and then contain the spill," he says. "They're just 575 watts, but they're 95 percent efficient, so sometimes they'll do the work of a 5K light."

Despite this battery of lighting units, darkness played an important role in the cinematographer's work on *Felicity*. "The reason most cinematographers like things to be dark is that if you show everything there's no mystery," he contends. "If there's no mystery, you're not compelling your audience to be curious. A lot of the art of cinematography is in what you hide and what you reveal. Without shadows, you can't hide anything."

Dennis Smith
The Practice
"Happily Ever After"

Dennis Smith received valuable early training from his father, a well-known NBC still photographer. He later worked as a news cameraman at ABC, where he earned four Emmy and two Peabody awards, in addition to winning AP and UPI Best Newsfilm of the Year honors. In 1979, Smith transitioned to narrative filmmaking. He shot aerial and underwater footage, handled Steadicam work, and operated for such ASC members as Jordan Cronenweth, Conrad Hall and John Toll, as well as Bruce Surtees, among others.

Smith's first assignment as a director of photography came during the four-year run of *Picket Fences*. He has since shot the independent feature film *God's Lonely Man* and the pilot for the WB series *Seventh Heaven*, in addition to two seasons of *The Practice*. "I was working with Dwight Little, a director who always gives me an opportunity to do something special," Smith says of the episode "Happily Ever After," which earned him the Emmy nomination. "The show had good dramatic content, and I've always thought that makes the photography look better."

Smith says it's never a problem to keep the show's oft-used sets looking fresh. "The scene may be set in the same room, but it's never the same time of day, never the same dramatic content, never the same actors, and we never work from exactly the same angle," he observes. "I'm always looking to make it better than the last time — to make it more interesting and more about the story."

Smith credits David Kelley Productions with allowing him the freedom to excel. "I have a crew that's been with me for eight years, so we move quickly," the cameraman remarks. "I find that when you're fast, the production will give you anything you want. If I want a 200' by 100' silk over the entire street on the Paramount backlot, because I know it's going to help us go faster and get the day done, they'll give it to me. In the eight years that I've worked for David Kelley Productions, I've had free rein 99.9 percent of the time in regard to the look of the show."

Last season, Smith directed an episode of another Kelley show, *Ally McBeal*, in which characters from *The Practice* crossed over into that series. He's currently preparing to direct another episode. "Directing has made me a better cinematographer," he says. "It makes me more giving as a cameraman, because I understand the precious little time the director has with the actors."

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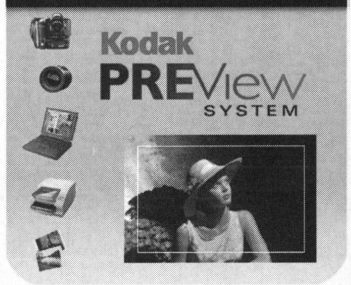
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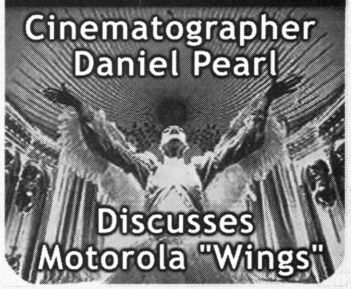

Cinematographer Daniel Pearl
Discusses Motorola "Wings"

Cinematography World News

Updated: Friday September 10, 1999 at 9:44 AM PDT

Kodak Appoints New Director

Michel Golitzinsky has been selected as the new director of the Kodak Worldwide Emerging Filmmakers Program. The program, which began in 1998, was implemented to support students and film schools, as well as filmmakers early on in their careers. The program also works in cooperation with the Public Broadcasting System and the Directors Guild of America to create funding, scholarships, product grants, seminars and equipment to its participants.

Fri Sep 10, 1999, 9:44 AM PDT

Martin Coppen Garners MTV Award

The MTV Award for Best Cinematography in a Video was awarded to Martin Coppen for his work on Marilyn Manson's "The Dope Show." Other nominees included Julian Whatley for "Freak on a Leash" by Korn, Thomas Kloss for Madonna's "Beautiful Stranger," and Daniel Pearl for Will Smith's "Miami." Coppen was also nominated for Hole's "Malibu" video.

Thu Sep 9, 1999, 6:51 PM PDT

Production News Briefs

Jack Green, ASC ("Twister" is currently shooting the Clint Eastwood directed "Space Cowboys," for Warner Bros. (Shooting in Florida, Texas, New Mexico and California)...

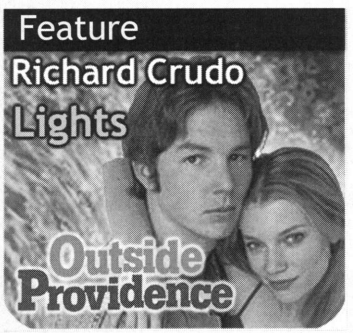
Don Peterman, ASC ("Get Shorty") is lensing "How the Grinch Stole X-Mas," for Ron Howard and Universal Pictures. (Shooting in Los Angeles)...

Tak Fujimoto, ASC ("The Sixth Sense") shoots "The Replacements," for Warner Bros. (Shooting in Baltimore)...

Don Burgess, ASC ("Forrest Gump") shoots the new Bob Zemeckis film "What Lies Beneath," for Dreamworks. (Shooting in Vermont)...

More Production News

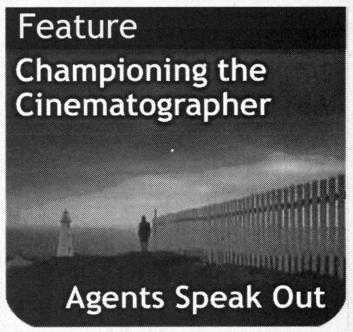
Feature


Richard Crudo Lights
Outside Providence

Feature

Rental Houses in the Digital Era

Feature


Championing the Cinematographer
Agents Speak Out

Options Debuts Two New Products

Options International, a worldwide distributor and system integrator for telecine and film-related equipment, will debut the X-Box modular video system and DAV's HD converter for MkIII telecines at IBC 99. The X-Box modular video system offers the ability to convert in real-time between multiple HD, Wind Stars and definition formats. DAV's HD Converter for Sony MkIII telecines into Multi Standard, SD and HD machines.

Thu Sep 9, 1999, 2:52 PM PDT

Academy Salutes Scorsese Library

Preparations are underway for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Academy Salutes University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television's 70th Anniversary Celebration,

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The Art, Technology and Business of Cinematography

Televised Gems

Bill Roe
The X-Files
"The Unnatural"

Bill Roe earned the 1999 ASC Outstanding Achievement Award for his camerawork on *The X-Files* episode "Drive" (see *AC* May '99). "The Unnatural" marked the writing and directing debut of series star David Duchovny, who penned a story that revolves around an African-American baseball team touring the country and playing exhibition games in the 1940s. One very talented player — who shuns the attention he receives — turns out to be an alien who simply loves playing the game.

The *X-Files* production built a baseball diamond in Simi Valley to represent the makeshift parks put up by traveling teams of the Forties. "We researched the lights they used in those days and imitated them by mounting standards in the backs of five period pickup trucks and topping them with huge Skypans," says Roe. "In those days, the generators wouldn't sync, so the lights would pulse a little bit. We re-created that effect ourselves. It really added a certain authenticity."

Roe and Duchovny considered a variety of special looks and processes to help convey the period, but in the end decided to shoot it straight. "We did numerous tests, but we decided to let the wardrobe, colors, and lighting provide the period feel," says Roe. "I find that sometimes if you do something drastic with the photography, it may just draw attention to itself. It seems to work better when each aspect of the production makes its own contribution, and then that combination suggests the sense of period."

As with most *X-Files* episodes, "The Unnatural" employed a constantly moving camera propelled in a wide variety of ways. "One nice thing about *The X-Files* is that we get to use a lot of toys," Roe enthuses. "We used the helicopter on the opening sequence. Almost every day we have cranes, hotheads and Steadicams."

Creative movement was also the order of the day for scenes inside the baseball team's bus, which was photographed via "poor man's process" on a hastily arranged stage in Simi Valley. Roe recalls, "We mounted our lamps on cranes to create the effect of the sunlight changing direction as the bus traveled, and we used a lot of smoke. We had a special dolly track inside the bus to use with a bungee-cam setup. We did a lot of fun things."

Outstanding Cinematography For A Minieries or Movie Of The Week

John Alonzo, ASC
Lansky

John A. Alonzo brings to his work a wide range of experience and skill honed over the course of more than 50 feature films as a director of photography. In 1975, he received Academy Award and BAFTA nominations for *Chinatown*. A few of his other credits include *Star Trek: Generations, Harold and Maude, Vanishing Point, Sounder, Black Sunday, Norma Rae, Blue Thunder, Steel Magnolias* and *Internal Affairs*.

The HBO production of *Lansky* earned Alonzo his first Emmy nomination. "I was drawn to it because of the script, which was written by David Mamet," says Alonzo. "The director, John McNaughton, had a very interesting grasp on the story about the life of Meyer Lansky, which Mamet had put together using facts as well as fiction. We discussed the desire that human beings have for good memories and how that fit in with the story.

"The challenge for me as a cinematographer was to interpret McNaughton's vision. He gave me a couple of picture books and some books about memory. As you become an older person, you remember things that happened in your life, but you may not be completely accurate about the facts. The facts are glamorized or softened, but they sate your appetite for good memories. This was an idea we wanted to use in making the film."

The film was mounted on a relatively modest budget. Alonzo, McNaughton and production designer Ed Macavoy each cut many corners to ensure that the production could afford a crucial trip to Israel for key scenes in which Lansky visits the graves of his grandparents and several religious sites. "The trip to Israel really made the picture authentic," Alonzo attests. "We filmed at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, and we shot it in an unusual way. People usually shoot it up close, because the natural tendency is to want to see everything in detail. Instead, we got back, so we could see the masses of people, and put Richard Dreyfuss [who plays Lansky] in the foreground. That way the shot tells more of a story; it tells you where you are and gives you a sense of place."

Many scenes for *Lansky* were filmed at the landmark Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. "We shot parts of scenes set in Poland there, as well as parts of some New York sequences," he points out. "We even used a matte painting of the Brooklyn Bridge. It was a kind of a return to an old-fashioned way of making movies, when Hollywood couldn't leave town. We used all of the available resources and skills to do it right. To me, that was wonderful."

Robbie Greenberg, ASC
Winchell

The HBO production *Winchell*, which tells the story of powerful columnist and radio star Walter Winchell (Stanley Tucci), earned director of photography Robbie Greenberg a 1999 ASC

TELEVISION ENTRY FORM
14TH ANNUAL ASC AWARDS
FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN CINEMATOGRAPHY DURING 1999

CRITERIA FOR TELEVISION ELIGIBILITY:

A program is eligible providing it was originally broadcast on television within the United States on a commercial network, a publicly sponsored broadcast system or cable outlet between **January 1, 1999** and **December 31, 1999.**

Programs originally exhibited in motion picture theaters, or initially sold or rented for viewing on home video equipment, are not eligible for awards in the television categories.

The definition of a regular comedy or drama series is a minimum of three original programs that aired during the awards year. The theme, story line or principal characters must be predominantly featured in multiple episodes. The series must be presented under the same title and each program must be related to the others. A series must have a continuity of executive supervision and/or production personnel so that it is thought of as a whole rather than individual parts. **To be eligible, the cinematographer must have completed at least two episodes out of the entire series, created and aired in the calendar period.** A group of programs that carry a main title (e.g. "tent" or "umbrella") but are, in fact, composed of various sub-units, will not be considered eligible as "a series."

The criteria for eligiblity in the mini-series, movie-of-the-week or pilot category is as follows:

A mini-series consists of two or more original programs based on a single theme, storyline or principal characters that tell one story with a beginning, a middle and an end. The mini-series must have aired during the awards year and may not be eligible for consideration in any other year. The episodes must be presented under the same title with a continuity of executive supervision and/or production personnel as defined in the preceding paragraph.

"Movies-of-the-week" or "pilots" are single original programs that are not segments of series and are broadcast in one part.

You may submit one entry per category. However, if you win for a pilot in the mini-series, movie of the week or Pilot category, you cannot win for the same program in the series category. (Entries will not be considered without accompanying tapes.)

ENTRY DEADLINE :

Monday, January 3, 2000
by 12:00 noon at the ASC clubhouse.

REQUIREMENTS:

A. **One entry form** per category.

B. (1) **¾-inch tape** of the **full program.**

C. (1) **¾-inch tape** with **a 4 minute excerpt.** Excerpts will contain scenes of no less than 1 minute. There can be no altering or cutting within a scene. Scenes must be continuous. **No credits are allowed on the excerpt.** They must be submitted with their original sound.

D. **A brief synopsis** of the project, no longer than 25 words.

SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR ENTRY FORM.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT:
ASC Awards Committee
Attention: Patty Armacost
P. O. Box 2230, Hollywood, California 90078
(323) 969-4333 ext. 103 or 1-800-448-0145
FAX: (323) 882-6391

**Theatrical motion pictures are chosen for judging under different criteria and are not included in this entry applica-*

ENTRY FORM FOR TELEVISION CATEGORIES

The deadline for receipt of entries is Monday, January 3, 2000 by 12:00 noon.

ONLY ONE ENTRY WILL BE ACCEPTED IN EACH CATEGORY.
A SEPARATE ENTRY FORM IS REQUIRED FOR EACH CATEGORY ENTERED.
THIS ENTRY FORM MUST BE COMPLETELY FILLED OUT TO BE VALID.

CATEGORIES (Check ONE box ONLY):

❑ **One episode of a regular series***
** To be eligible the cinematographer must have completed at least two episodes out of the entire series created and aired in the calendar period.*

❑ **One episode of a mini-series, movie-of-the-week or pilot**

Cinematographer

_____

Address

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Phone: (_____) _____

Agent or Agency

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Address

_____

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Phone: (_____) _____

Title of Entry

_____
(Program within a series or mini-series, movie-of-the-week or pilot)

Title of Series or Miniseries

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(If applicable)

Program First Broadcast on

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(Network, PBS Station or Cable Outlet)

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Producer

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Company's Address

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Phone: (_____) _____

A Brief synopsis: *25 words or less. Please print clearly.*

_____

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ENTRY WILL NOT BE VALID IF NOT ACCOMPANIED BY TWO TAPES *(no exceptions)*:

1. ONE ¾-INCH TAPE — **full program**
2. ONE ¾-INCH TAPE — **4 minute excerpt** (NO CREDITS ON THIS TAPE)

I have read and agree to the rules for submission.

Signature _____

Date _____

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Televised Gems

Outstanding Achievement Award (see *AC* Oct. '99). The project was the cameraman's first with director Paul Mazursky. "A television project is unlike a feature film, because of the reduced budget," Greenberg relates. "You don't have as much time to prep or to discuss the look of the film. You have to find a benchmark that puts you and the director in the same place as quickly as possible."

In spite of the tight time pressures, Greenberg and Mazursky found time to plan. "Paul and I knew that the only way we were going to accomplish this film with the kind of quality we are both accustomed to delivering was with decent preparation," Greenberg explains. "I don't mean just what philosophy we wanted the film to be about or how we were going to approach it, but specifically what we were going to do at each location. There wasn't the luxury of coming into a location and saying, 'What do you feel like doing?' We had to know days in advance. For example, I mapped out the crane shots weeks before. That planning was invaluable in the execution."

He continues, "We approached this film exactly as if it were a feature. I used a very light Tiffen ProMist filter throughout to mitigate the sharpness of the new film stocks and the quality of the lenses. I used Kodak [Vision] 5279 for the night exteriors and night interiors, [EXR] 5293 for day interiors and an occasional day exterior depending on the need, and [EXR] 5248 for the day exteriors. I did pretty much the same thing on my subsequent film, *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*." (See *AC* Aug. '99 for complete coverage.)

Greenberg details, "I overexpose the 79 by a third of a stop. Kodak rates it at 500; I rate it at 400. To be honest, I used to do it because I thought it rendered the blacks better in the final print, but with this new Vision stock, it's very possible that [overexposing] is completely unnecessary."

Greenberg performed a series of tests designed to help him choose a set of lenses for *Winchell*. "I tested the old Zeiss Superspeeds, and I had the lens person at Panavision play with the elements a little bit — to shift the apparent focus and play with the depth of field," he says. "I was looking for a kind of uncoated lens for a period look. But, in the end, I found that I couldn't accomplish it by manipulating the lenses. I found that combining the Primos with the low-grade ProMist gave me the quality of image I liked, and the period was basically captured through costume design, lighting and production design. Everybody got into it."

Michael D. O'Shea, ASC
The '60s, "Night 2"

Michael O'Shea is now a four-time Emmy nominee. He began his career as a film loader in the camera department at Warner Bros, and later assisted and operated for Howard Schwartz, ASC. After operating for such ASC members as Edward Brown, Robert Stevens and James Crabe, as well as cinematographer Nick McLean, O'Shea did second-unit work on *Spaceballs, The Goonies, The Lost Boys, Geronimo* and *The Specialist*. His television credits include *Doogie Howser, M.D.; Relativity; Nothing Sacred; Sweet Justice*; a pair of *Rockford Files* telefilms; and the telefilm *To Love, Honor and Deceive*. His feature credits include *Robin Hood: Men in Tights, Dracula: Dead and Loving It* and *Here On Earth*.

One of O'Shea's visual challenges on *The '60s* was the integration of his original camerawork with archival footage used in transitional scenes. "Director Mark Piznarksi and I wanted to re-create that look you see in the footage of the riots and demonstrations of that era," says O'Shea, "but we wanted to avoid doing it in post. We consulted with

Don Henderson and Cassandra Pippion at Kodak and found out that much of that footage was shot using 16mm reversal stock. Quite often — for instance, during our re-creation of the Columbia riots — we shot with several types of cameras and a variety of stocks, including some 16mm units with black-and-white or color reversal film."

O'Shea says that each edited segment of the show would begin with real archival footage, cut to his 16mm footage (which often featured similar action), and then cut to 35mm images of scripted performances. "I think that the blending of techniques helped the audience connect the fictional film and archived footage into a seamless story," comments O'Shea.

The cinematographer had to keep a close eye on his exposures since he was often covering the same scene with various stocks, all of which had different ASA ratings. "What made it a little difficult at times was that the reversal films are quite slow," he notes. "The black-and-white 7278 is 160 ASA. We were shooting night exteriors for some of the big Chicago and Columbia riots, using 35mm color negative and 16mm black-and-white reversal side by side. We had to have enough stop to compensate [for the change] from the 500 ASA [Eastman EXR] 5298 to the 160 ASA 7278. If I was shooting at a T2.8, I would have to build the light up a stop or so to get an image on the black-and-white. It wasn't too difficult — we just had to watch it. We were rolling four and five cameras at times."

O'Shea's emulation of documentary footage even extended to the mistakes. "I noticed that if the original documentary camerapeople went into dark areas, they might also have blown-out areas because the reversal film they used had very little latitude. But that was effective, so I tried for that look."

➢

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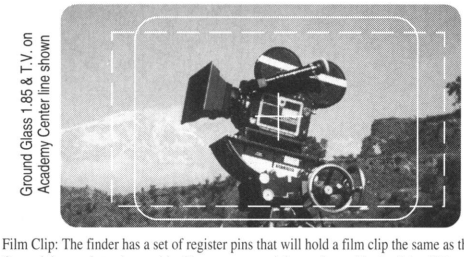

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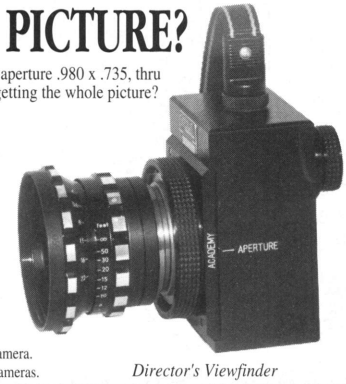

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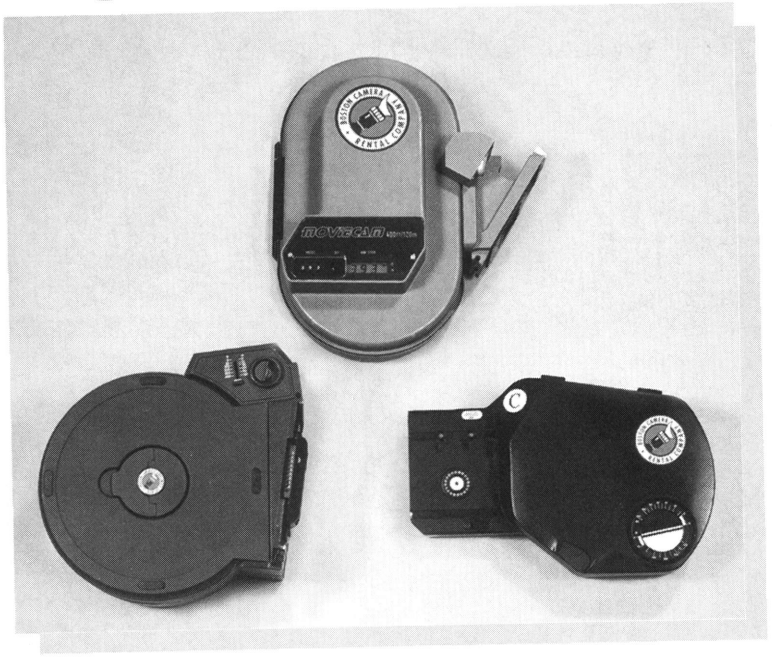

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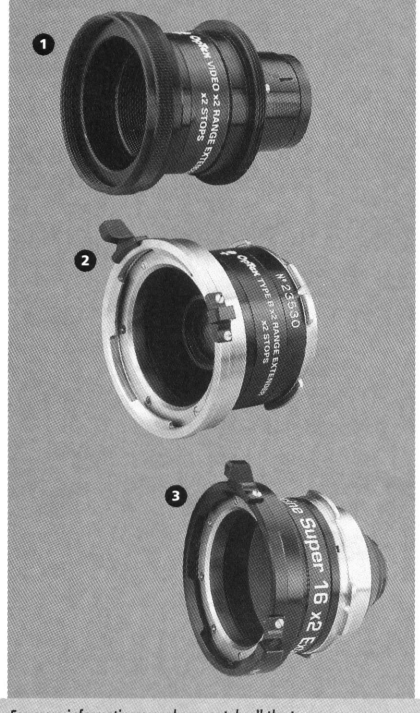

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Televised Gems

Roland "Ozzie" Smith
Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman: The Movie

Roland "Ozzie" Smith's camerawork on the CBS series *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* earned him Emmy and ASC Outstanding Achievement awards in 1994, and a second ASC nomination in 1995. Smith followed his father, Harkness Smith, ASC, into the camera department at MGM, where he worked with an array of mentors, including such ASC members as George Folsey, Karl Freund, James Wong Howe and Robert Surtees. Smith's other series credits include *Street Justice* and *Alien Nation.*

Directed by James Keach, the *Dr. Quinn* movie begins with the arrival of a ruthless businessman to the town of Colorado Springs, where he schemes to mine copper on the town site. After Dr. Quinn (Jane Seymour) and her husband Byron (Joe Lando) oppose this plot, the outsider kidnaps their baby. Dr. Quinn and her husband are soon off on a journey to Mexico to track down and rescue their child.

The picture was shot in Super 16 over an 18-day schedule. "There was a lot more action than in the television series," Smith attests. "It was much more ambitious than anything we did on the series. I shot a lot of tests, and avoided diffusion or filters that could degrade image quality.

"We used the sets at Paramount Ranch and then went on location to two other ranches," he adds. "I used Kodak stocks — 7245, 7248, and 7279. All of my past experiences and all of the tests I have done tell me these films are the best for Super 16. It's all compatible when you cut it, edit it and do the transfers — and there are no grain problems whatsoever."

Smith fine-tuned his visual approach for the longer-form picture. "I made it a little harder," he details. "I don't underexpose because

that produces grain, and I mostly use prime lenses. I keep the exposure down the middle, and when I go in to time the show, we bring up the chroma and crush the blacks. I light for what the source is. That way, I get the most out of the lamp.

"As far as the interiors are concerned, I light the oil lamps, put a work light in, rehearse, look at the light and how it hits the actors, duplicate it, and rim-light them," he explains. "I then create hot spots to layer the image. Depending on the scene, I can create depth by setting an oil lamp way in the back. I'll put a hot light on it and match that light's density to the flame. Then I fill in from there. I don't use any front light at all. It's all edges and soft light, unless it's a shot on Jane."

Smith recently finished another telefilm with *Dr. Quinn* star Jane Seymour, entitled *The True Life Story of Fanny Kemble.*

Bruce Surtees
Dash And Lilly

Bruce Surtees is a veteran of more than 50 motion pictures. He was nominated for an Academy Award in 1974 for his work on *Lenny*, and his other credits include such memorable films as *The Outfit, The Shootist, Beverly Hills Cop, Bad Boys* and *Risky Business.* His long collaboration with Clint Eastwood resulted in the films *Play Misty for Me, Dirty Harry, High Plains Drifter, The Outlaw Josey Wales, Pale Rider* and *Escape from Alcatraz.*

Dash and Lilly is a multiple Emmy-nominated telefilm chronicling the bombastic love affair between writers Dashiell Hammett (Sam Shepard) and Lillian Hellman (Judy Davis) in Hollywood during the 1940s and '50s. The film was directed by Kathy Bates.

Surtees was unavailable at press time. ■

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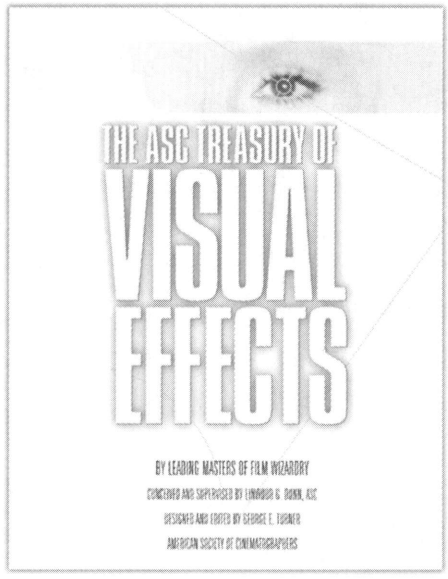

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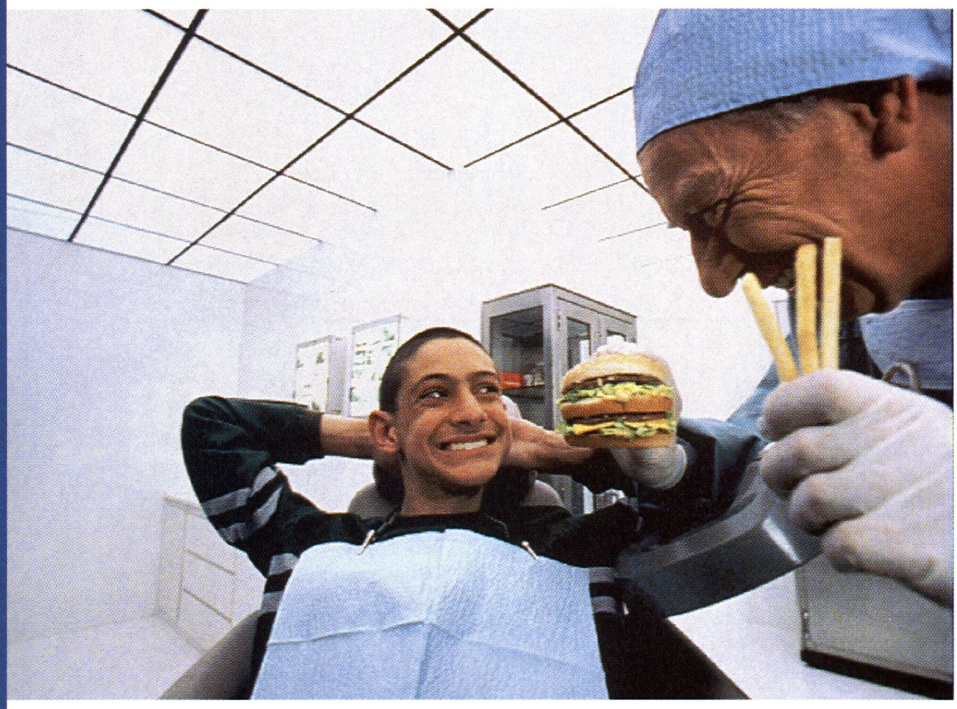


AC takes a look at the ever-changing realm of commercial and music video production.

by Stephanie Argy

Music videos and commercials — a training ground for up-and-comers and a place for the more established to experiment — have established themselves as legitimate genres with their own trends, styles and problems.

One of the most significant recent developments in the music video and commercial fields has been the division of the markets into very high-budget projects and very low-budget ones, with few remaining in the middle.

According to Sam Aslanian, executive producer of music videos at David Naylor & Associates, the disappearance of medium-sized videos dates back about a year and a half, to the time when MTV began restricting their playlist. Bigger-name acts, Aslanian says, will always get airplay, so record companies can justify spending $500,000 or more on one of their videos.

Low-budget videos (those that cost less that $200,000) require little risk, so they are made as well. Record executives have to debate whether to invest moderate money into a product that may never get substantial airplay. More often these days, they spurn the mid-budgeted video.

Commercials, too, are now at either one extreme or the other. While some spots have multimillion-dollar budgets, others cost far less. Michael Bodnarchek, president of A Band Apart Commercials, says that the trend toward low-budget commercials has been led by the "dotcom" companies. "The great thing about the dotcoms is that they aren't afraid to take risks," Bodnarchek offers. "These people don't have an audience, so they'll do whatever it takes to get attention."

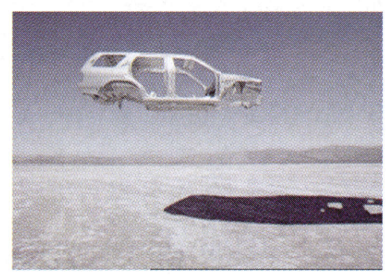
Stylistically, both music videos and commercials seem to be in a relatively lighthearted phase. For commercials, comedy is what many ad agencies are seeking. Director Jim

Barton of San Francisco's Kaboom Productions observes, "There's this movement from broad comedy to subtle comedy." He feels this is a good trend for cinematographers, since the subtle style is more conducive to beautiful images created with longer lenses and more artful lighting. "It's nice to get someone who's not a 'comedy' cinematographer," he says, adding that he likes the effect of teaming a "pretty-picture" cameraman with a "comedy creative." Music videos are now in more of a lighter period, too, as pop artists such as Britney Spears and Ricky Martin currently dominate the market.

While production schedules for music videos and commercials have never been leisurely, they've gotten even tighter lately. Jerry Spivack, creative director and visual effects artist at Ring of Fire, points out, "What happens is, you'll pull a rabbit out of your hat on one job, but the client doesn't realize that you had everyone in your shop working 24 hours a day. So they'll say, 'Let's do that again.'"

In addition to changes in budgets and schedules, Aslanian is finding that record companies want more control over the look of the videos. More and more, the companies are even demanding approval of the cinematographers who shoot these clips. "A lot of times, especially with female artists, they're looking for beauty, and what they perceive beauty to be," he says.

Aslanian adds that even though he wants cinematographers who can shoot beautiful images in the real world, he also needs them to be adept at delivering images that can be easily augmented with the latest visual effects techniques. In short, experience in working with greenscreens, motion control and camera-array systems is highly sought-after. This is largely because music videos, like commercials, have become extremely reliant on CG and 2-D digital effects. "More than ever, almost all of our projects are post-intensive," confirms Aslanian. "We've gotten to the point where some of our post budgets are outstripping our production budgets."



Effects are sometimes used to work around the schedules of performers who are unable to spend much time making a video. On a recent video for singer Jennifer Lopez, for example, all of the footage involving the star was shot against greenscreen, then composited with footage shot in Hawaii by the director and a second-unit crew.

The industry is also facing some political issues, such as the creation of a "bill of rights" that would cover interactions between music-video producers and record companies (just as the Association of Independent Commercial Producers sets standards for commercial production). "It's time for the industry to grow up and put guidelines in place, and have everyone act civilized and reasonable," says Aslanian, who is also the West Coast chairman of the MVPA. Some of the producers' main concerns include cost overages, rules on cancellations, and decisions about who pays for weather days and insurance deductibles.

The other major movement in both commercials and music videos has been toward the north, as productions head off to Canada. While department heads and other creative personnel make the trip along with their projects, crew people are left behind in the United States.

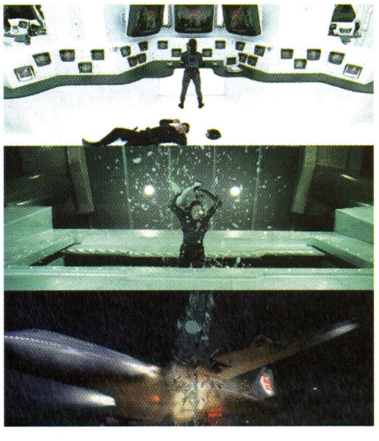
Though Bodnarchek says he wants to keep work in the United States, he explains that production companies can't argue with the savings they get from going to Canada. To keep production in the U.S., prices would have to come down for everything — from crew salaries to equipment rentals to camera packages. "Everything has to come back down to reality," he stresses. "It's going to have to be a

Opposite: A surreal yet comic image from a McDonald's spot directed by Francis Lawrence for David Naylor & Associates. This page, top to bottom: New York City becomes an immense turntable in the music video for singer Lauryn Hill's song "Everything is Everything," featuring visual effects by the Santa Monica-based firm Method; actor Martin Lawrence gets funky in the video for rapper Jay Z's tune "Girl's Best Friend," featuring 200 visual effects shots created by Method; an image from a recent Infinity spot touting the lightweight frame of their new SUV, featuring visual effects work by the West Hollywood-based company Ring of Fire; a bizarre image from a recent rock video for the Offspring, also featuring effects by Ring of Fire.

Images courtesy of Hype (for DNA and Ring of Fire) and K Media Relations (for Method).

Selling An Image

Images from the ambitious Sega Dreamcast "Apocalypse" spot, directed by John Moore and shot by Brenden Galvin. The ad features a female thief in a futuristic cityscape largely created by CG artists at Sight Effects.



collective move by everybody, or production is just going to continue to leave."

The following accounts trace the production of several recent commercials and music videos, illustrating some of the issues raised here — while concentrating on the efforts of the cinematographers charged with bringing some complex concepts to the screen.

Creating a videogame "Apocalypse"

In the new Sega commercial "Apocalypse," the suggestive tagline "It's Thinking" follows the visual assault and destructive mayhem that this spot unleashes upon viewers. Aired as a branding benchmark for Sega's new high-powered Dreamcast videogame console, the commercial was presented in both 60- and 90-second versions, and set out to indelibly imprint Sega's "swirl" logo onto the public's consciousness.

Conceived by the San Francisco-based advertising agency Foote, Cone & Belding, the conceptual team — headed by creative director/copywriter Brian Bacino and creative director/art director Steve Fong — enlisted Irish director John Moore (of bicoastal Headquarters) and cinematographer Brendan Galvin to realize their larger-than-life concept.

"Apocalypse" touts the Sega Dreamcast's technological prowess with a visceral man vs. machine scenario. Says Moore, "The agency had sent me a fairly concise story outline about a thief stealing the Dreamcast console. I then took that one-page treatment and turned it into a full 20-page script. Commercials are visually-oriented, but we decided to keep the concept in written form for a long while before doing storyboards. We instead discussed several visual references, mainly *manga*-style Japanese animation. We wanted to re-create the look of good Japanimation, and finally came back to classics like *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell*."

Letterboxed in a 2.35:1 aspect ratio, "Apocalypse" begins in the high-tech Sega nerve center, where a shadowy figure has surreptitiously gained entrance into the company's "mother room" and is in the process of stealing the Dreamcast technology (a scenario reminiscent of the centerpiece scene in the 1996 feature *Mission Impossible*). Overhead lighting suddenly flashes on, revealing an Asian woman — clad in black, form-fitting espionage attire — standing in a stark, white room. A guard enters and notices a futuristic device tapped into the Sega system. The thief, who has eluded detection by clinging upside-down to the ceiling, lowers silently behind the guard and, in one blinding move, flattens him and grabs the goods. The entire room is instantly bathed in red light as alarms sound and the red Dreamcast swirl logo appears on all of the monitors. The machine is onto her, and the thief must escape.

Filmed in Vancouver, British Columbia, "Apocalypse" shot for a total of eight days, three of which were dedicated to stage work detailing the interior of the Sega headquarters. "John and I have worked together quite a bit," says Galvin. "In fact, we were both camera assistants together before John began directing. The production designer, Derek Wallace, is Irish, and we've worked with him a lot as well, so it wasn't a situation where one of us went off on our own. The production design and the lighting sort of blended together.

"The control room, for instance, was built in an octagonal shape with mirrors, and every second mirror had a parabolic mirror on it as well. When we stood in there, we could see literally everything in the room reflected in them, so we could not put any lights on the floor. We instead built six 10-bank Kino Flos into the ceiling, and those provided all of the illumination. We hid the camera by cutting a hole in one of the parabolic mirrors for the lens."

As the thief runs down a long curved corridor, the greenish-white fluorescent lights lining the hall begin turning red and literally "chase" her. Just fractions of a second before some large steel shutters close down, she dives through a plate-glass

Images courtesy of Sight Effects.

window and lands in the middle of a *Blade Runner*-style Tokyo setting. Rain pours down in sheets and lightning flashes as the thief flees along a bridge set against a futuristic cityscape. In the distance, the red Sega swirl logo looms ominously on the buildings.

"We shot in downtown Vancouver, but it's supposed to look like Japan," submits Galvin. "A primary visual element used [to create this effect] was a lot of Japanese signage. John and I experimented with colors on this commercial, and we decided to pick a few main colors and include them anywhere we could. Even if we didn't see all of the signs in a shot, they were a motivation for where a lot of our light — be it a huge Jumbotron screen or a neon sign. However, getting the number of signs we needed was expensive, so we decided that we could create the signs with [specially designed] Plexiglas sheets backlit with Kinos or a Tweenie. That approach also gave us the opportunity to easily gel the signs to get different colors when necessary."

Hotly pursued, the thief reaches a getaway van, but as she struggles with her keys, a pilot in the cockpit of a large jet airliner overhead suddenly loses control of his craft. The radar screens all glow red with the now-familiar Dreamcast swirl logo — Sega has taken over. The plane crashes through a radio tower, sending half of it plummeting toward her. She makes a break for it just as the tower crushes the van, creating a giant explosion. Searching for another means of escape, the thief spies a motorcycle, and is soon racing it rapidly down the city's rain-soaked streets.

"The [Sega] computer 'offers' the thief the motorbike as an escape route," reveals Moore, "but it's setting her up. It lets her escape, but then triggers a traffic light sequence to cause a car crash. She sails through the air and lands on the hood of a

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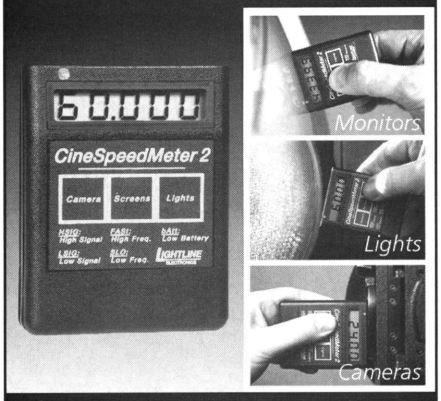

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police car, in which the cops have just been looking at a picture of her on their in-car computer screen."

The getaway car and motorcycle sequences required the production to close down several city blocks for five nights, and to provide a formidable amount of art direction and lighting for the massive backdrop. "John wanted to be able to shoot at up to 100 fps, so electrically and grip-wise, it was a huge undertaking," recalls Galvin, who selected Kodak's Vision 500T 5279 stock for the night exterior work and Vision 200T 5274 for the interiors. "John initially wanted to shoot anamorphic, but given the number of cameras we needed, I knew we couldn't get enough lenses — we had four Panavision cameras and two Eyemos. By shooting in Super 35, we could still get the aspect ratio we wanted, but we'd have lighter, faster lenses, allowing us the speed that we would need."

"We wanted the city to look almost as if it was a backlit transparency," adds Moore. "Contrast plays a huge part in that, so we deliberately decided to avoid that dreaded blue, backlit, foggy night look. We ended up using a StarLight — which is a compact Musco-type unit available in Vancouver — and 18Ks and 20Ks, all at a lower height than you'd expect. Generally, with nighttime exteriors, people want to get the light up as high as possible. We intentionally lit from a bit lower to avoid polluting the backgrounds with any backlit fog. We'd aim low and rake the light across the shot.

"The joy of animation is that you can add a lot of detail into the backgrounds, but people think you shouldn't do that with motion pictures. We made a conscious decision to shoot close and wide with Primo lenses so that we wouldn't throw our backgrounds into confusion. We really wanted to push the art direction as far as we could, and motivate the lighting from that art direction. Brendan is particularly brilliant at doing that."

Besides dressing the locales to suggest a Toyko-like setting, the filmmakers used extensive post work transform Vancouver into the envisioned megalopolis. The production brought in Venice, California-based Sight Effects to handle this task. "The original idea was that we'd put some enhancements in the backgrounds," says visual effects producer Alan Barnett. "But as we began working on the individual shots, the level of the work increased. We first created all of the signs in 3-D, so we could add them in and animate them as needed. We were often building an entire city in the background of the shots while adding our signs to existing foreground buildings, as well as CG rain and diffusion effects."

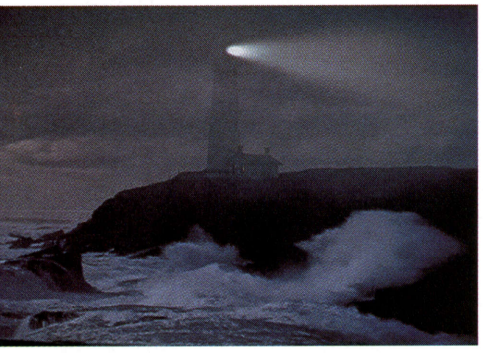
In addition to modifying the city backgrounds and compositing the getaway van's explosion, Sight Effects also contributed to the spot's aerial sequences. The company extended plate shots of Seattle past the city's natural horizon; added signs and lighting effects to the existing buildings; and even provided a few key shots that were created entirely with CG, such as the aircraft's collision with the radio tower.

Moore credits Foote, Cone & Belding's collaborative attitude as a primary factor in the success of the finished "Apocalypse" spot. "Brian Bacino and Steve Fong really allowed us to be spontaneous," the director states. "They were very knowledgeable about the material and open to suggestions. They didn't put an anchor on us, and they were great about letting the director and cinematographer do their jobs. Often, you have people from the agency folding their arms and saying, 'We know how it should look,' which prompts the creative team to respond with, 'Well, we know what we're doing.' But if you work that way, nobody wins."

— Christopher Probst

Building a "Lighthouse" for Chevrolet

Although director/cinematographer Eric Saarinen has shot both documentaries and features (including the Albert Brooks comedies *Modern Romance* and *Lost in America*), he has recently concentrated on commercial work, focusing particular attention on postproduction tools and and their impact on the photographic realm.

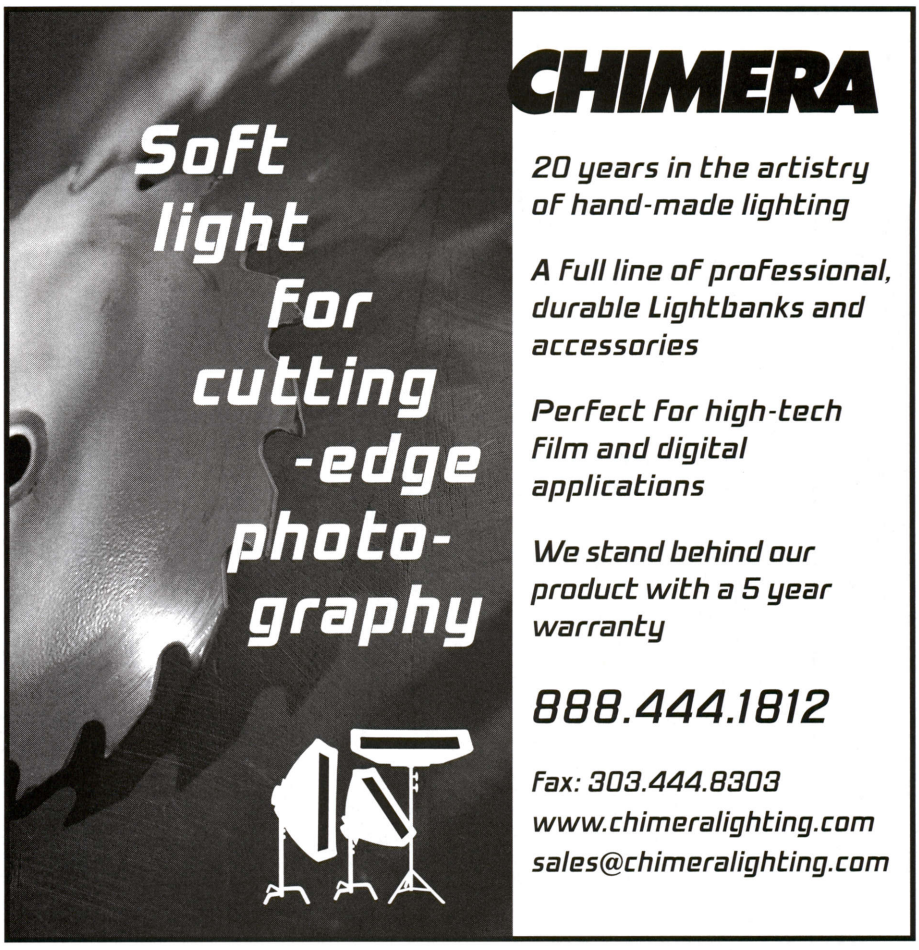


A Chevy Blazer promises safe passage in "Lighthouse," directed and photographed by Eric Saarinen.

In Saarinen's recent "Lighthouse" spot for Chevrolet Blazer, the camera races along a foggy beach toward a lighthouse on a distant cliff. Waves pound the shore as the camera rises from the beach toward the lighthouse beacon. As the camera draws nearer and breaks through the layers of fog, it reveals that the light is actually cast by a Blazer parked *atop* the lighthouse.

"Lighthouse" was part of a three-spot TV campaign that portrays the Blazer as a symbol of safety in an perilous world. The spots were based on an existing print campaign, and the agency didn't want to vary much from the print images. To help maintain the feel of the print ads, each spot seemingly consists of a single take. However, in the case of "Lighthouse," that "one shot" was crafted from nearly 200 different elements, according to Sight Effects visual effects supervisor Alan Barnett.

Image courtesy of Plum Productions.



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Because Saarinen felt strongly that the lighthouse should be a real location, rather than a miniature or a computer-generated creation, he sent scouts all over the continent, from Newfoundland to Washington, looking for the right shooting site. Ultimately, he chose a spot at Pigeon Point, near Santa Cruz, California.

Saarinen began the shoot at the lighthouse before moving on to do some additional stage work. "You have to shoot the uncontrollable portion first," he points out. At Pigeon Point, he shot the lighthouse from a Spacecam-equipped helicopter, using a Mitchell camera fitted with a 17.5-75mm T2.3 Primo zoom set at 50mm.

To make the necessary compositing work as easy as possible, Saarinen flew in a straight line toward the rocks and lighthouse. "If you're skewing across the water, it makes it tough to overlay later," he explains. "We knew when we tilted and when we panned, and we tried not to zoom at all."

Though the location's imposing surf was one of its main attractions, a Pacific storm changed the angle of the waves as they entered the bay on the day of the shoot. "They were coming from too far to the north, so we didn't get the big waves," recounts Saarinen. To get the waves needed for the spot, he shot the aerial approach toward the lighthouse twice, first on the actual beach below the lighthouse, and then again on another beach, 28 miles to the north, where the surf had the look Saarinen wanted. The cinematographer took care to ensure that this second pass corresponded with what he had shot before, in terms of angle and airspeed.

After finishing their location work, Saarinen and his crew moved to a soundstage, where they spent two days shooting motion-control car elements, using the same Primo lens. The challenge was to re-create the long approach across the beach that Saarinen had filmed from the helicopter. "We couldn't track in from a quarter-mile, but we got as far back as we could, and from there, we digitally shrunk the image," says Saarinen. The shrinking was partly masked by the fact that the earliest part of the shot was shrouded in fog.

However, Saarinen faced another difficult task: re-creating the steep angle of the helicopter's approach to the lighthouse. In the aerial shot, the camera rises about 300' from the beach to the top of the structure. The solution was to place the Blazer on a computer-controlled hydraulic gimbal similar to the motion-base units used in flight simulators; this allowed the filmmakers to tip the car at any angle. Beginning the shot with the Blazer

Watts Up With SoftSun 3.3K?

What's the best new way to light interiors for the ever-popular car chase? Leave it to veteran action cinematographer David Eggby whose credits range from *Mad Max* to the forthcoming *Blue Streak*.

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tipped away from the camera — making it appear that the camera was positioned far below it — the gimbal was programmed to gradually change the angle so that by the end of the shot, the camera and the truck appeared to be on the same plane. "Since it was motion-control, we could do the shot and refine it until we had it," indicates Saarinen. "We did multiple passes for various reasons. We did takes for the shafts of light coming from the headlights, for backlight, and for a beauty shot of the side of the car. In terms of running up and down the track, we probably shot it 40 or 50 times."

Saarinen employed Kodak's EXR 5248 whenever possible, but relied on Vision 500T 5279 in low-light situations, noting that "the Vision stock is really good for matte work." He used no filtration at all, preferring instead to add those kinds of effects in post. In the case of "Lighthouse," he created the effect of a diffusion filter with Discreet Logic's Flame while finishing the spot..

The forbidding sky behind the lighthouse was also put together via Flame. On location, the weather had been suitably stormy, so Saarinen shot separate 10-second plates of the sky. Using the Flame, the plates were lined up geometrically to create a seamless backdrop that could be panned around at will.

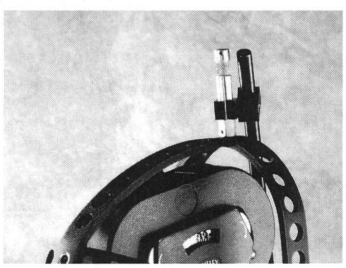
Flame was also used to create much of the fog seen in the spot. "The fog elements we shot on stage didn't do everything we wanted," contends Barnett, whose company created a particle-based 3-D digital atmosphere to add to the practical haze. "The fog grew and grew in terms of its complexity."

Sight Effects spent about three to four weeks on "Lighthouse," putting three Flame artists and one CG artist on the job to simulate the look of a single continuous shot. "We had 900 frames of information that we were layering," Barnett says. "There were so many complex layers that the process slowed down."

— Stephanie Argy

"Sunshine" in Hawaii

Shooting in beautiful, natural surroundings can be surprisingly challenging for a cinematographer, especially when the area is as well-known and well-photographed as Hawaii. To film a music video for Coko's tune "Sunshine," cinematographer Aaron Schneider traveled to Oahu with director Darren Grant, where the duo shot a tapestry of idyllic images featuring the singer. For Schneider, the most difficult part of the job was finding a way to create a vision of Hawaii that would stand out from the many other videos and commercials that have been shot there.



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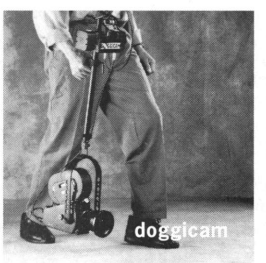

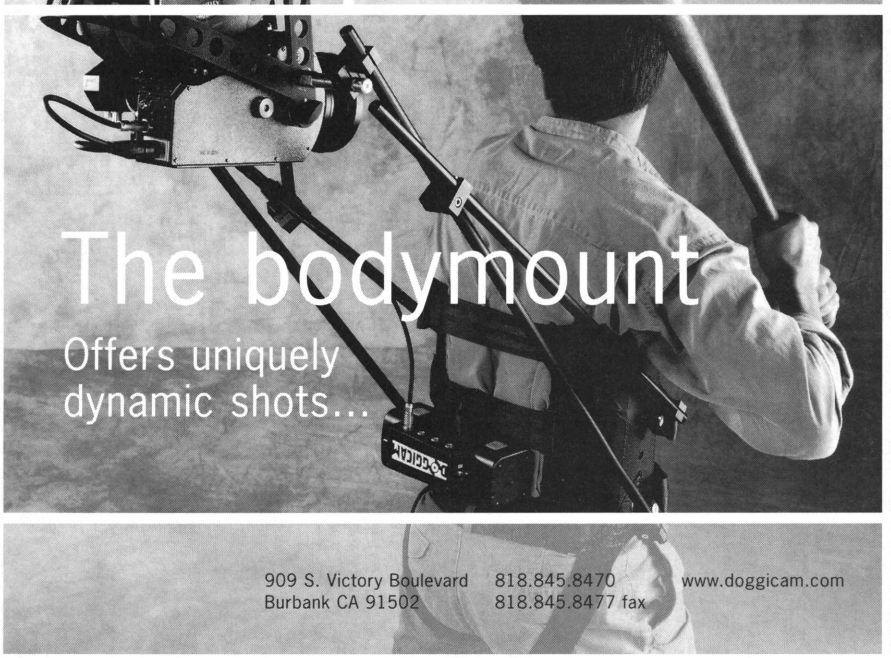

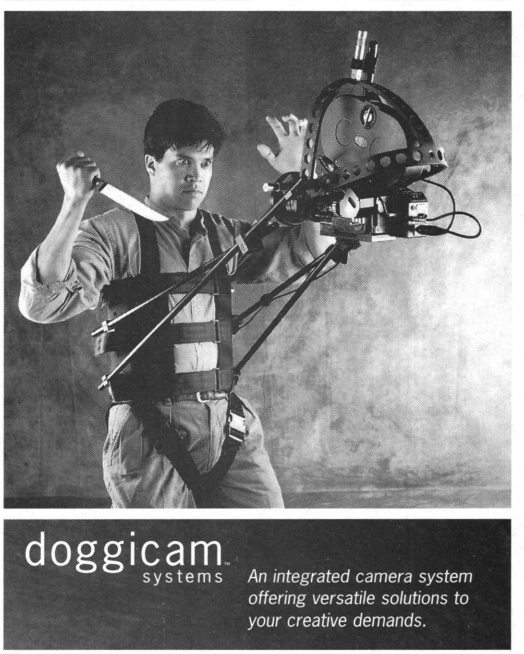

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Because the budget for the "Sunshine" video was tight, the production took place over just two days. "When you have two sunrise-to-sundown days, it ends up being kind of a military drill, and you don't get as much variety," Schneider confesses. "You have to minimize company moves." Still, the video was shot at four locations, meaning that each day was broken by a company move, which consumed a considerable amount of time. "You're always fighting the battle for visual variety when you can only shoot in four places," Schneider submits, "but we still tried to make a travelogue that would show off all the beautiful and unique looks that Hawaii has to offer."

To give the video a unique identity, Schneider and Grant enhanced its look photographically by shooting on reversal stock. "We decided that shooting on reveral would be an additional way to distinguish our view of Hawaii from what people are accustomed to seeing," the cinematographer explains.

Schneider had recently used reversal film while shooting the pilot for the CBS series *Buddy Faro*, in order to create what he describes as a "retro-period vibe" for the show (see *AC* Oct. '98). On "Sunshine," the cameraman was more interested in another aspect of the stock. "Ektachrome stock is very colorful," he notes. "For this video, it helped us take advantage of the lush colors at our locations."

Originally designed in late 1950s, Ektachrome is also less sharp than many of Kodak's more modern films. "It has its own inherent 'filtration,' and it's very flattering to faces if you use it properly," says Schneider. This characteristic was especially important on "Sunshine," since the featured artist was a woman. Knowing that the video would be shot entirely outdoors, Schneider used Kodak's 160-ASA daylight-balanced 5239 stock.

According to the cameraman,

The singer Coko performs her tune "Sunshine" in the tropical paradise of Hawaii, photographed in anamorphic on reversal film by cameraman Aaron Schneider.

shooting on reversal stock forces a cinematographer to think backwards. With negative stocks, he points out, most cinematographers overexpose slightly to get a thicker negative and more saturated blacks. "All cinematographers are used to cheating on the side of overexposure," he says, noting that with reversal stock, the opposite is true. "You actually underexpose a half stop if you want to saturate blacks."

Schneider says that the other difference in working with reversal is the way it enhances contrast. "Reversal glorifies the high-contrast look," he offers. "It's the 'home-movie' look — there's a lot of contrast between the sunlight and the shadow. But the stock also tends to die without contrast. When you shoot a cloudy day or a low-contrast day on negative, you have a lot of information on the negative to go into, so you can expand the contrast. Reversal's view of the light is very narrow, so if all it's getting is midtones, that's all you're going to have on the reversal print. It's kind of hard to push that."

As a result, shooting in Hawaii was problematic because the weather often turned from bright and sunny to overcast in a matter of seconds. "Our biggest obstacle was the weather — it was really crazy," agrees Grant. "The quality of light was flat, which didn't really work for us. The song is called 'Sunshine,' but we only got it about 50 percent of the time."

To lend the video even more style, Schneider and Grant shot it with anamorphic lenses. "I'd mentioned to Grant that I'd shot my first feature, *Kiss the Girls*, in anamorphic [see *AC* Sept. '97], as well as a recent commercial for Bell Atlantic," Schneider recalls. "I told him I loved the format, and he liked the idea of using it."

After landing in Hawaii, Schneider called Denny Clairmont at Clairmont Camera in Los Angeles to assemble a package comprised of an Arri-35 III and Hawk anamorphic lenses, the same series used to shoot *Star Wars: Episode I — The Phantom Menace* (see *AC* Sept. '99, p. 66, for details on this lens system).

Schneider felt that "Sunshine" offered the perfect opportunity for him to test out the Hawk lenses. "A cameraman has to acquaint himself with what's out there," he says, noting that he usually relies on Panavision cameras and lenses. "In the spirit of experimentation, you throw aside what you're used to and learn from it.

"The Hawks performed very well, and are reasonably compact," adds Schneider, who notes that the lenses were a bit larger than Panavision's E-series, but in the ballpark of Primos.

Schneider advises that all anamorphic lenses have some common limitations, which have led to the development of a certain cinematographic language on anamorphic projects. "You'll always notice that there's a bit more headroom in anamorphic movies," he points out,

Image courtesy of Smoke & Mirrors (for A Band Apart).

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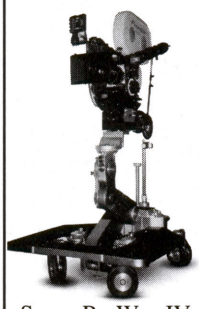

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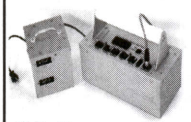

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explaining that this is because all anamorphic lenses tend to go soft toward the top and bottom of the frame. "If you put an actor's eyes too close too the top of frame, you put them into the critical line."

With anamorphic lenses, vertical lines also tend to bow, especially with wide-angle lenses. This tends to bow features in faces as well, and the cinematographer had to be careful about his choice of lenses. "We were mainly shooting Coko with longer lenses, in order to glamorize her," he discloses.

Schneider did go to wider lenses while shooting vistas or scenes featuring children. "We used the whole range we had, from 40mm to 250mm," he says. "One of the nice things with anamorphic is that you get soft backgrounds. Even down in the 50mm, 75mm and 100mm range — relatively normal focal lengths — the depth of field falls off more quickly, and you get the feel of a longer lens."

For close-ups, Schneider used a Tiffen Soft F/X filter. "In my experience, a Soft F/X doesn't affect the light as much as they do the resolution of the lens you're working with. Unlike a ProMist or fog filter, they simply add an extra layer of glass that slightly decreases the clarity of the image; rather than diffusing the image, they just take the edge off. If I felt a lens was getting too crisp — for example, if I was seeing a bit too much of the makeup — I'd just add that extra pane of glass."

— Stephanie Argy

"Invisible" Jeans

Ordinarily, one of a cinematographer's most important responsibilities is lighting performers' faces, but John Schwartzman, ASC didn't have to worry about faces at all on a recent Levi's clothing spot directed by longtime friend Michael Bay. Except for the clothes, the commercial's entire cast was invisible. "It was the first time I didn't have to worry about lighting people," Schwartzman says. "On this spot, we were asking ourselves things like, 'Does the wall look good?' It was all about bodies and shapes."

In the humorous spot, a clothed-yet-invisible young woman comes to visit an invisible young man. The two engage in some torrid foreplay, shedding clothes as they go, before being interrupted by the unannounced arrival of the young man's equally invisible mother. The commercial was filmed with real actors dressed in greenscreen bodysuits; the actors were later removed from the scenes, leaving just the empty shells of their clothes.

The Levi's spot was filmed over three days, which was largely consumed by the motion-control

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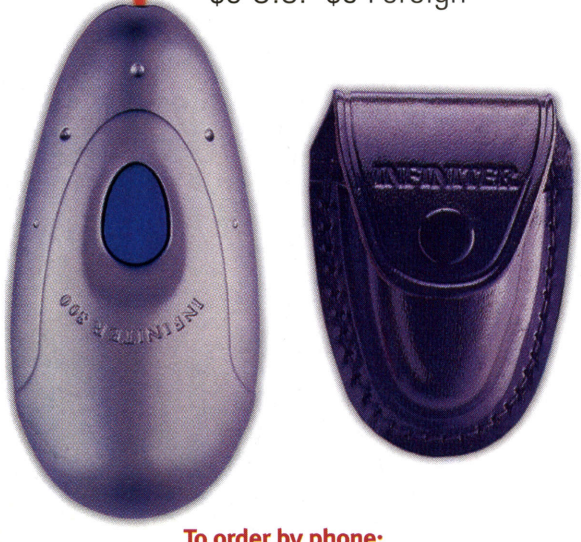

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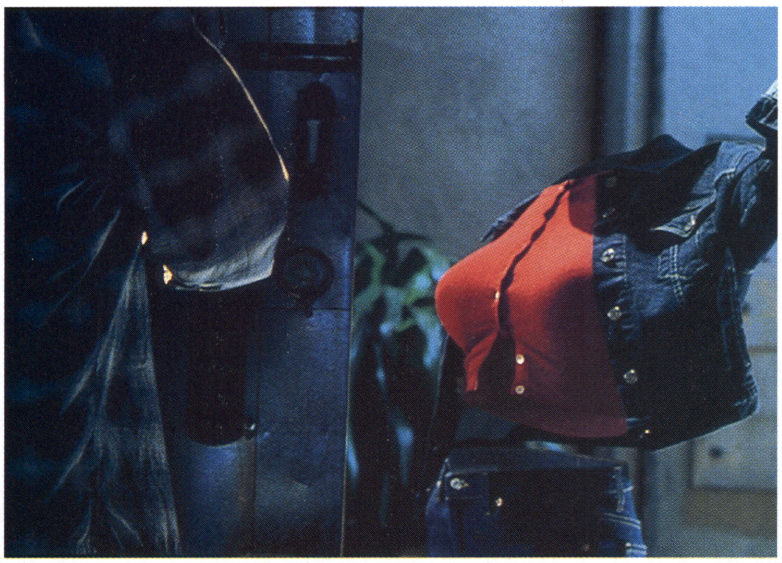
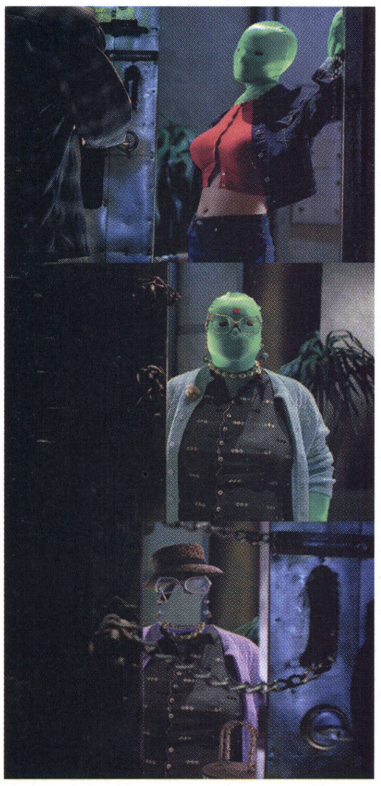
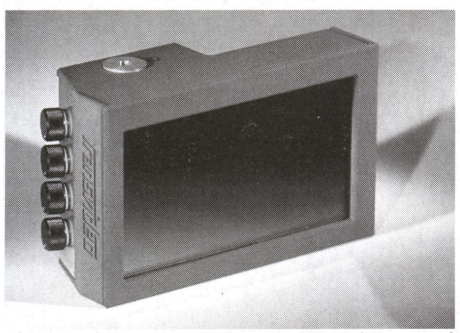


Image courtesy of Digital Domain.

work needed to create the illusion of the cast's invisibility. "We had 47 storyboarded shots, but none required fewer than three mo-co passes," says Schwartzman. "On this spot, we used what I like to call 'live' motion control. We operated the shots live, but recorded the movement. Then, when we got a take Michael liked, we used that information to drive the mo-co unit." This approach gave the camera movement a more organic feeling, and also allowed the crew to move faster



Directed by Michael Bay and photographed by John Schwartzman, ASC, this humorous spot for Levi's clothing features expert "invisible" effects by Digital Domain.



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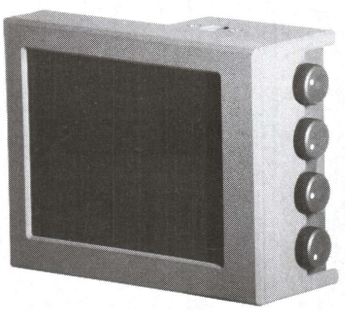

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because they didn't have to wait for the motion-control rig to be programmed.

Schwartzman opted to shoot the spot on Kodak's Vision 500T 5279 stock. Because it's such a fast film, he was able to use half as many lights as he would have for other stocks, thus keeping the lighting expenses down. "Though this spot had a fairly good-sized budget, it didn't warrant spending another $6,000 on lighting," he says. "Michael is budget-conscious, and if we could save that money, we would." Schwartzman adds, however, that he wouldn't have used a fast film stock if it had meant compromising the spot's look.

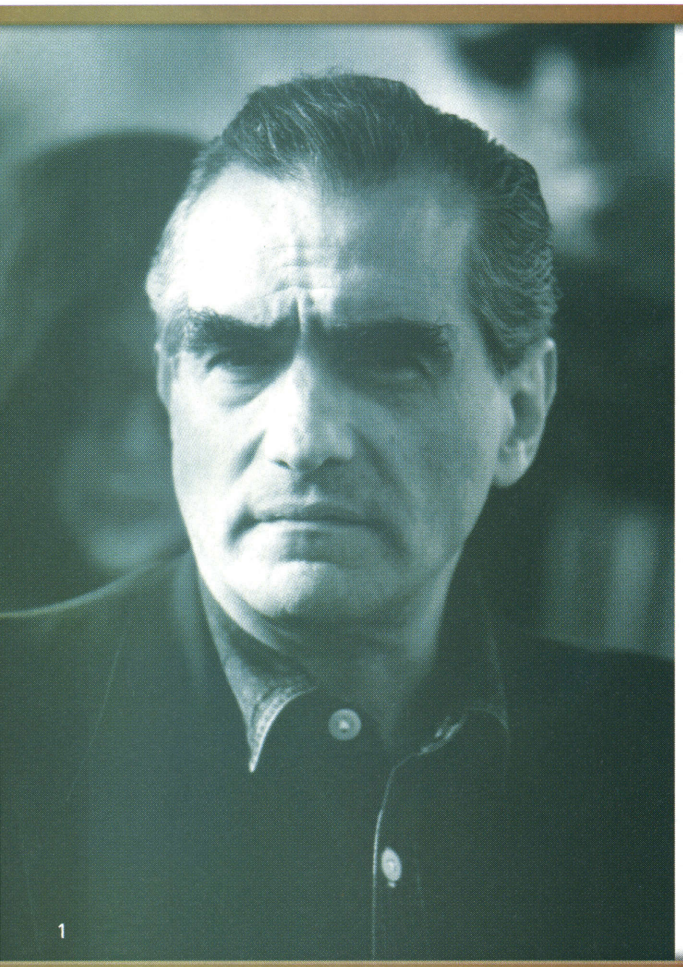
Schwartzman approaches lighting in a very intuitive way, asking himself, "How does this set want to be lit?" Bay prefers strong blacks and highlights. In the case of the Levi's spot, the cinematographer was able to use more hard light than he usually would because he didn't have to illuminate faces. "I would call the look 'moody dramatic realism,'" he submits. "It was all about bringing out textures."

Schwartzman used mixed color temperatures throughout the spot. "It became something that we decided on that day," he says. "We kind of mixed it all up. Wherever there were practicals, we tended to go warm; in the kitchen, we tended to go greener. There's no rhyme or reason other than it looks interesting. It all goes back to taste and graphics. We were going for a kind of hip, modern look, because this spot was slated to air on MTV and ESPN. Those audiences are incredibly sophisticated in terms of visuals."

Though the spot was elaborately storyboarded, Schwartzman admits that the boards meant little to Bay. "If you're paying a director of that caliber $25,000 a day, you want him to do what he does best," the cinematographer reasons. "I give him the room to improvise. You have to allow him to work in the style in which he is most creative."

Schwartzman shot the spot with Panavision cameras and Primos lenses, noting that Bay prefers to work at the extreme ends of the optical range. "Michael is either on the 14.5mm or he's on the 300mm," offers the cameraman. On this particular spot, Bay tended to stay wide — 14.5mm, 17.5mm, 21mm — because the most important aspect of the photography was establishing the apartment space.

While Schwartzman found the job relatively easy from a technical point of view, the hard part for him was keeping track of all the bits and pieces, such as what would be invisible and what would be seen. For example, the inside back portions of



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— **Martin Scorsese**

sweaters were easy to forget. "That was the real challenge on this one — all the minutia," he maintains. "Of course, some of that minutia doesn't become apparent until it's staring you in the face at 11 p.m.! The challenge was to keep it together so it wouldn't be a total nightmare for [Digital Domain visual effects supervisor] Fred Raimondi."

Raimondi had done other invisible-man gags in the past, and immediately realized how challenging this commercial would be. "There are things that you always try to avoid, and the Levi's storyboards avoided none of them," notes Raimondi. Bodies touching bodies are complicated, as are invisible body parts crossing over clothing and over other people. "There's one scene where you see the guy and the girl making out on a couch — an incredibly tricky thing to do, especially if you start with real people."

The actors on set were covered entirely in green bodysuits. Raimondi explains that the suits were green not so that the digital effects team could key off them, but because they would stand out so clearly against the warm, low-key background of the set.

Most of the clothing on the invisible people was actually computer-generated via Softimage. "There was no way we could have done this spot without creating the clothes in 3-D," Raimondi contends. "There was just too much missing stuff. As soon as the job was awarded, and they had cast the male and female leads and picked the wardrobe, a bunch of our artists went over to the casting session and photographed the models from head to toe. They got samples of the costumes, and began modeling them. We had to get a running start on it."

Digital Domain spent about 4½ weeks on the commercial. Scott Rader, a digital effects supervisor at the company, recalls, "We had about seven or eight animators working in Softimage, about four roto artists mainly using Elastic Reality, and four compositors using Inferno."

No matter how technically complex a given commercial proves to be, Schwartzman tries to keep his approach to the material as natural as possible. "I like to think that the technical side is something that I try to forget," he submits. "It's like that old cliché about music — you learn scales over and over, and then you forget them." With cinematography, he notes, it's the same thing: the cinematographer learns lenses, stocks, cameras and lighting until it all becomes second nature. "When I'm working, I probably take my light meter out twice a day," Schwartzman concludes. "I try to just go by my eye."

— Stephanie Argy ■

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New Products & Services

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Unusual Developments

Crest National's cross-processing service adds edge to *Three Kings*.

by Jay Holben

Set immediately after the Gulf War in the deserts of Iraq, director David O. Russell's film *Three Kings* is a harsh but enlightening examination of the troops caught up in that conflict. The story follows four U.S. soldiers (George Clooney, Mark Wahlberg, Ice Cube and Spike Jonze), who discover a map leading to millions of dollars in stolen Kuwaiti gold. While searching for the treasure, the soldiers come face to face with the harsh realities of post-Desert Storm Iraq.

Three Kings was shot primarily in Casa Grande, Arizona (as well as locations in El Centro, California, and Mexico), and director of photography Newton Thomas Sigel (*The Usual Suspects, Apt Pupil*) concentrated on capturing an oppressive feel to represent the Iraqi desert. Sigel explains, "We wanted the film to begin and end with a desaturated tone — [we sought to] whiten the skies, whiten the sand, and take out some of the colors to create a more muted, burned-out palette. To accomplish that, we bleach-bypassed the negative [at FotoKem in Burbank, California]. In the second act, however, when these guys go off in search of the gold, it's basically the first time that they have been out of the safety and confines of the military base. It's also the first time they have an unguarded experience with what is really happening in Iraq, and David [Russell] and I wanted that to be a very disorienting experience. We wanted to create that feeling of being in a strange place, where all of a sudden you notice everything because nothing looks familiar. We tried to really define that transition between the world of their base and the world outside."

To accomplish that transition visually, Sigel turned to Eastman Kodak Ektachrome 100 Professional Plus Film (EPP100), a daylight-balanced, color, reversal still-photography stock that offers increased color saturation. Kodak custom rolled the film into 1,000' lengths, punched the rolls with proper Bell & Howell perforations and striped the batch with latent Keykode for the production. The reversal stock was then cross-processed by Crest National Laboratories in North Hollywood, California, to result in a negative.

Although described by Kodak as a highly unstable misuse of their emulsion, the technique of cross-processing has become popular in the last few years among still photographers, as well as music video and commercial directors of photography. The technique has also been employed on several feature films, including *Clockers* (see *AC* Sept. 1995) and *U-Turn* (see *AC* Oct. '97). Both films employed Eastman Kodak's 5239 high-contrast reversal stock (long defunct from mass-manufacture and now primarily loaded into in-flight cameras used by NASA and the U.S. Air Force).

Above: Cameraman Tom Sigel (far right) sets up a shot with director David O. Russell (far left) while shooting *Three Kings* on location in Arizona. Left: A series of images representing the high-contrast, burned-out look that Sigel achieved by cross-processing Kodak's EPP100 reversal stock.

Sigel himself had previously used cross-processed reversal emulsion for the "Demon-Vision" sequences in the film *Fallen*. "I've done a lot of cross-processing work," he notes, "and I found that I really like what happens to the colors with the [Kodak] EPP100 stock, more than any other stocks that I've cross-processed. I've used the 5239 — which is an old VNF film — and it just didn't seem as if it had enough of an effect to make it worth the effort. I prefer the EPP100 for a project like *Three Kings*, because it has a more radical shift in the color and in the contrast. Being a slower film, the EPP100 also has a finer grain than the 5239, and seems to capture more detail in the shadow areas."

Traditionally, when placed in the appropriate E-6 developer, reversal film travels through two developing stages. The first turns the light-activated silver-halide crystals into black silver metallic grains without forming color couplers. This, in essence, forms a black-and-white negative of the photographed

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image. The emulsion is then washed and the black silver grains are removed, leaving previously unexposed grains on the film. In a second developer solution, these unexposed grains are chemically exposed (fogged) and the color couplers are formed to create a positive representation of the photographed image.

When the reversal film is cross-processed, it is run instead through a negative ECN-2 developer. The normal first developer step is therefore skipped, and the exposed grains are immediately coupled with their corresponding color dyes. The unexposed grains are then washed away to create a color negative representation of the photographed image. The elimination of the second developer step in cross-processing is what gives the resultant negative a uniquely skewed color palette and high-contrast reproduction.

"Working with cross-processed film is a tricky thing," Sigel warns. "Whatever your particular lighting style is, you have to completely rethink it, because [cross-processed film] responds so differently than the basic Kodak or Fuji negative stocks. Everything that you've trained yourself for in the past doesn't apply. You really have to light and shoot in a totally different manner. Shooting cross-processed film is one of the few times that I actually like to use front light. Because the look is so extremely contrasty, when you want to read detail in people's faces, you have to really light them and light them hard.

"You also really need to watch your exposures, because there is absolutely no latitude whatsoever. When you move from a shaded area into the sun, you have to ride the exposures the whole way. You can't just let things go, because once your detail gets into the shadow areas, it's just gone. The limited latitude is partly a property of the reversal film itself — which inherently has less latitude than negative film — but it's also very much a property of the cross-processing, which really accentuates that contrast. Even considering the narrow latitude of the reversal stock, whatever shadow detail you would normally have seen if you were processing it as a reversal is far greater than once you've crossed-processed it. Because there is no EK base, you also have to accept — and even make part of your vocabulary — the way the color will shift as you move from shadow to sun. You literally see the whole color balance of the film shift within one shot. If you don't want that, you have to change your shot — there's no other way around it."

Dean Ramser, senior account representative at Crest National, testifies, "Some [of the shots in *Three Kings* were really questionable, because the image came out so contrasty. A couple of times we were all afraid that they were going to have to reshoot some scenes because they couldn't work out [shadow] detail. However, we found that once we went through the full process of making an IP, a dupe negative and a release print, we could pull more detail out of the shadow areas than we initially thought possible. All of the blacks, which were really dense in the daily printing, also developed texture and detail once we went through the dupe negative. Where there might otherwise just have been a black blob [as in the case of the dark suit that actor Mark Wahlberg wears toward the end of the film], we found that we could pull out the lines of a suit lapel, the button holes and sometimes even the fiber of the coat itself with a print from the dupe negative. The same went for eyes, skin tones and facial hair. In the first print we made, those areas may have been solid black, but the print from a dupe negative really brought that detail out while still keeping a nice, hard, strong cross-processed look."

One of Sigel's greatest assets in the success of the cross-processed sections of the film was Crest National's dailies color timer, Ivo Stainoff. An avid still photographer, Stainoff was intimately familiar with the cross-processing technique through his own work. He became an invaluable resource for the cinematographer, constantly offering feedback on the success of the cross-processed footage. "Ivo is a very good timer," Sigel asserts. "Very early on, he was tuned into the look that we were going after, and he was excellent to

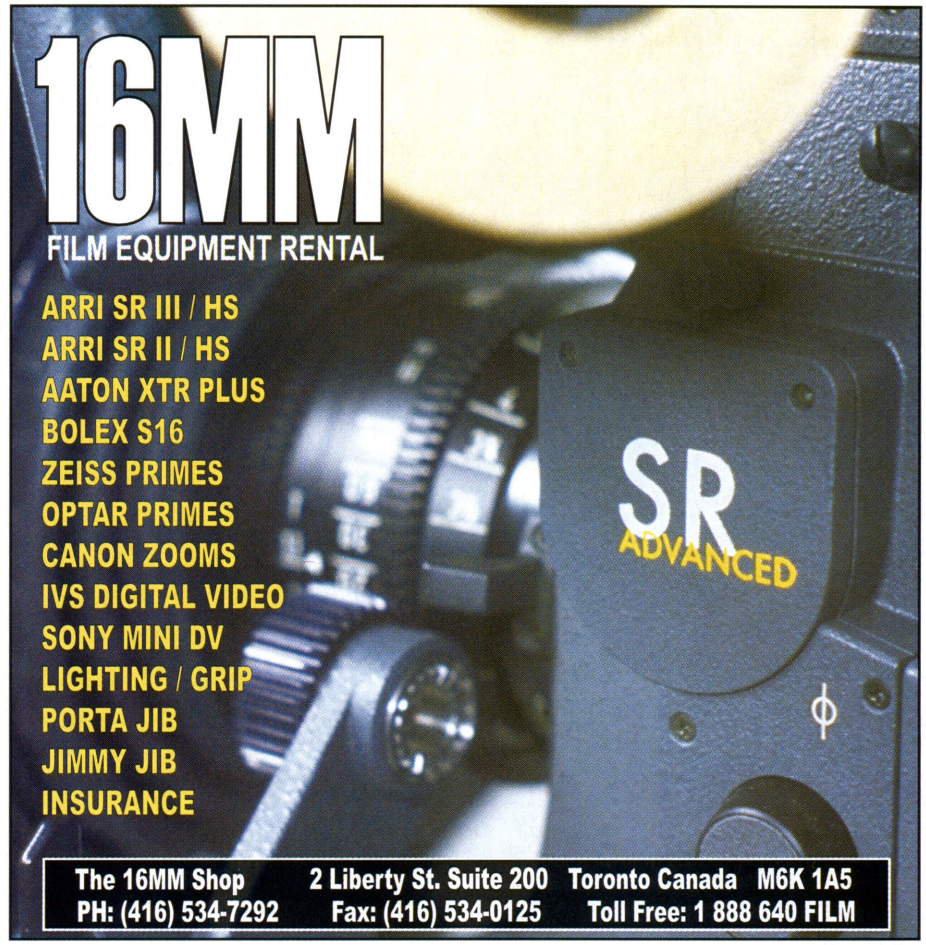
communicate with. It was the best way for me to know what was going on with the film — how the negative was moving or not moving, when we were in trouble and when we were okay."

Stainoff submits, "Basically you have a very high-contrast image, and you have to manipulate it a lot more than a regular negative to find the perfect balance. You have to try to accommodate everything in the frame, across the board, choosing what you're going to sacrifice and what you're going to concentrate on.

"The main difference between cross-processed negative and regular negative is the film's density," the timer continues. "In a regular negative you might have a characteristic curve with a gamma of perhaps 1, for example. But with a cross-processed negative, you might have a gamma of 3, which is very contrasty. In other words, you have very little toe or shoulder to work with. In my own personal experience, I've found that a lighting ratio of, say, more than 2:1 or 3:1 is already exceeding the contrast curve of the cross-processed film. Of course, that density is what you're looking for in a cross-processed image, because color is determined by density, and the unique look comes from that super-dense negative. It's just a bit more challenging to finesse in the timing.

"In still photography, cross-processing has been fairly popular, but you have a lot more control in that realm than you do with motion picture films," Stainoff notes. "When you're working with stills, you can more carefully control your density and characteristic curve through the development stage much more successfully than you can in motion-picture lab work. In a motion-picture lab, you're confined to running about 180 feet per minute through the developer, and you really don't have a lot of fine control over that. If you slow that down, you might run into uneven development or a variety of other problems. Still, you can achieve a very fine balance with motion picture cross-processing if you're very careful with your exposures."

In an attempt to make hard data on cross-processing widely available,



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Stainoff has created a website dedicated solely to the special process: www.crossprocess.com.

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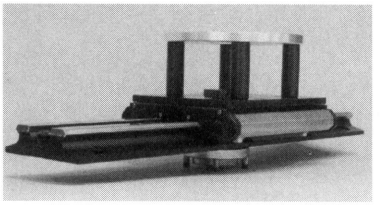
Over-the-shoulders Made Easy

MH Sound of West Hills, California, has introduced the Oversaver, a system that allows the camera operator to slide the camera 12 inches to the left or right of center to correct framing when the dolly or actor misses the mark. The camera remains free to pan and tilt. A locking wheel and track system assures smoothness and silence as the camera slides. The camera also may be positioned vertically or upside down without lifting off the track. A tie-down



screw is provided for locking the camera in any position along the track. The Oversaver attaches to the camera dolly using the standard Mitchell Mount and Locking Ring.

MH Sound, (818) 715-7533 or (818) 887-1970, fax (818) 887-1970, e-mail: oversaver@webtv.net.

Rotating Camera System

Film Drome International of Great Britain is offering a unique camera system for Steadicam, tripod, crane or handheld use that allows a camera to be rotated a full 360 degrees around the axis of the lens while being moved in the usual three planes. The rotation is smoothly and endlessly variable in terms of both speed and direction.

The rotating head is balanced for the small 35mm Konvos camera, but may also be used with 16mm Arri SR cameras. However, with Arri SR cameras, rotation is not exactly through the line of the lens. The Russian-made Konvos is pin-registered and speed-accu-

rate at 8, 12, 16, 24 and 32fps. Powered using Arri 12V, the camera comes in a standard Arri PL mount with an adjustable eyepiece and video tap that can be fitted to the eyepiece. The dimensions are 9.5" x 5" x 9" (24cm x 12.5cm x 22.5cm). One 400' magazine and four 200' magazines come with the Konvos.

Available for the Konvos is a 7"-long 25-80mm zoom lens with built-in zoom motor. The PL-mount lens has an aperture range from T3.4-22 with a minimum focus length of 3'.

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Fast Flooring

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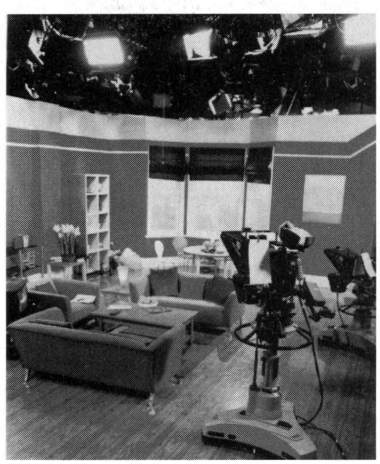

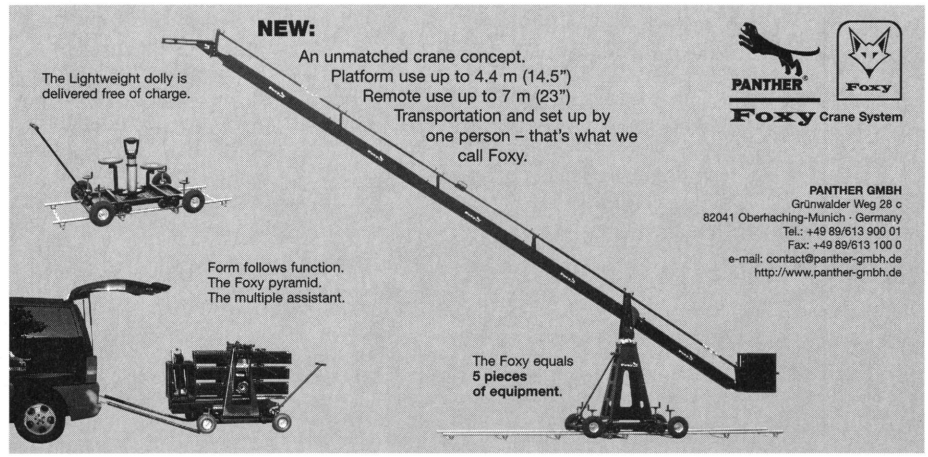

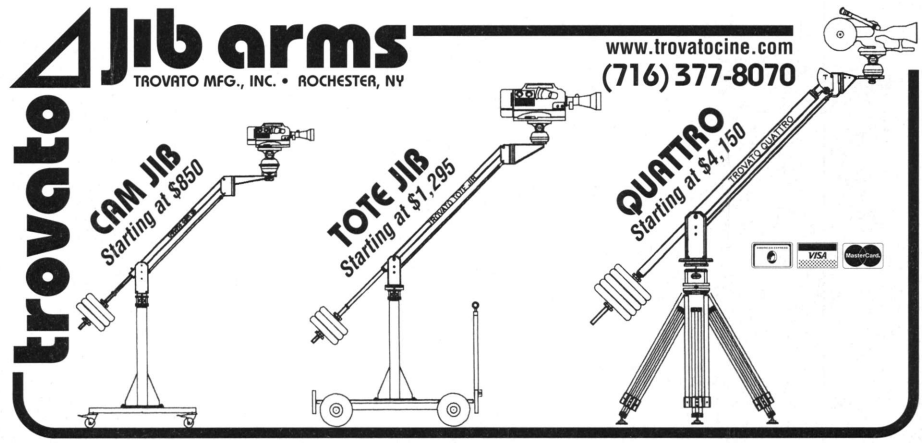

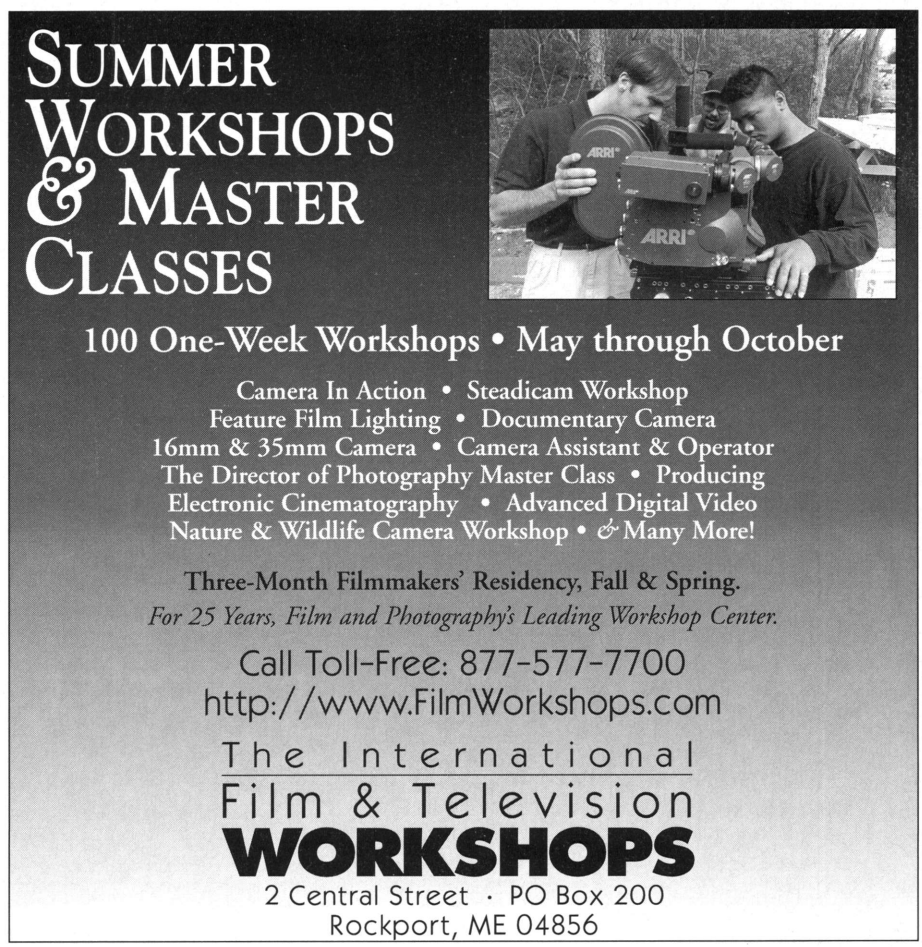

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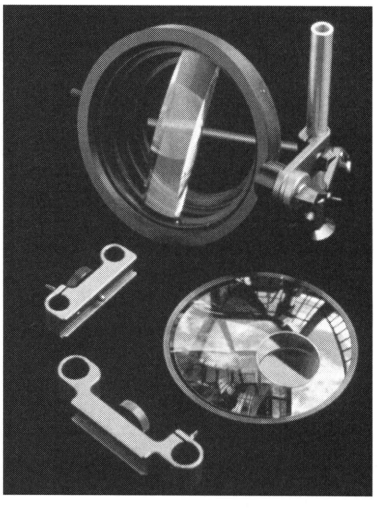
London Diopters

England's South London Filter has introduced Strip and Double Vision diopters in 138mm. The new diopters work on all lenses accepting 138mm round filters, either within a matte box or in conjunction with the OpTex 138mm diopter holder, for in-camera optical effects.

The diopter/holder system allows



full movement of the diopter, including swing and tilt. A geared ring has been designed to rotate a filter 90 degrees to the lens.

The Strip diopter's "strip" width comes in 20mm and 30mm sizes and in strengths of +1, +2 and +3. The Double Vision is available in three variations: a main diopter strength of +2 with a 1/6 off-center lenset, a main diopter strength of +2.5 with a 1/3 off-center lenset and a main diopter strength of +3 with a 2/5 off-center lenset.

South London Filter Ltd., +44 (0) 207-620-3060, fax +44 (0) 207-620-1441, e-mail: carey_slf@compuserve.com. ■

Points East

A Retro-Comic View of Manhatten

by Eric Rudolph

Johnny Twennies (Gibson Frazier) gabs with his frazzled editor in *Man of the Century*.

Spend enough time in New York City and you will occasionally meet people who seem to think they live in another time, and who dress and act according to their particular "retro" convictions. While many of these folks are just having a bit of fun with fashion, imagine encountering a young Manhattanite who is completely convinced that he's living in the 1930s.

Such a man is Johnny Twennies, a sharp-dressing, intrepid and very upbeat reporter for the should-be-long-defunct *New York Sun-Telegram*. Twennies is the hero of the imaginative and truly unusual film *Man of the Century*, a Fine Line Features release that's "a real sweet treat," as Twennies might say in his adopted era's hip lingo.

This stylish, clever and smartly photographed black-and-white 35mm film was shot in Manhattan for less than $400,000. Between the detailed photography of Matthew Jensen, the committed performance of producer/co-writer/star Gibson Frazier as Twennies, and sharp direction by co-writer Adam Abraham, *Man of the Century* makes for a convincing and very funny conceit. Considering that Twennies is constantly surrounded by clear evidence that it is the end of the 20th Century and not the beginning, this is quite a coup.

Jensen, a Los Angeles-based USC grad, had shot a few independent features (*Starstruck, Eyeball Eddie*) since earning his diploma, but had never photographed a 35mm black-and-white feature. Because he was going to be shooting Manhattan in monochrome, Jensen naturally thought of Gordon Willis, ASC's work in Woody Allen's *Manhattan* and *Broadway Danny Rose*.

During early talks with a lab about working in the nearly lost art of black-and-white, staffers asked Jensen if he had consulted with any older cinematographers with the requisite

Photo by M. Jensen, courtesy of Fine Line Features.

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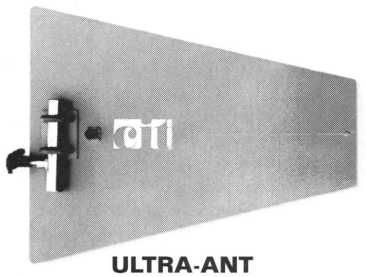

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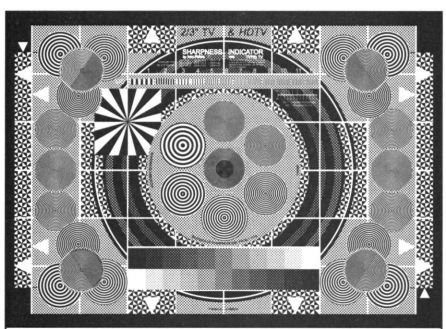

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know-how. Jensen recalls, "Someone asked if I'd talked to Gordon Willis. Shocked at the question, I said, 'Uh, no.' They countered, 'Would you like to?' Someone at the lab then called Willis and we ended up having several long conversations."

Willis was extremely helpful, says Jensen, who notes, "Gordon was very generous about basic technical issues, such as not worrying about using green or yellow filters when shooting the black-and-white film in daylight, and, perhaps more importantly, how to deal with the pressures of doing something different.

"He also helped me understand how to *see* in black-and-white — how important it is to pay attention to the contrasts in wardrobes and walls. Fortunately, I had the luxury of projected, synched dailies, which is very rare in the independent world. By the second week, I *was* seeing in black-and-white."

Frazier and director Abraham both come from theater backgrounds. These pedigrees, along with the lack of money and a desire to adhere to the conventions of films of the 1930s and '40s, resulted in a film with a proscenium look that highlights Jensen's striking, moody black-and-white photography. "Adam is very good at getting scenes across in a proscenium setting, and I prefer to move the camera rather than cut," Jensen says. "We very often didn't have that extra hour to go in for close-up coverage, but many films of the Thirties era were done mostly in master shots, so it worked out well."

The filmmakers originally wanted to shoot scenes viewed through Johnny's throwback POV in the "squarish" 1.33:1 aspect ratio, and modern-day scenes in 2.35:1, but that plan simply wasn't possible on their budget. "It would have been great for contrast to go from modern, widescreen scenes to Johnny Twennies in a box," laments Jensen.

Jensen instead established the film's contrasting eras with vastly different lighting styles. This approach is most evident early on, as the film crosscuts between the naturalistic, soft and occasionally silhouetted Willis-inspired lighting within a modern art gallery — where Johnny's hip girlfriend, Samantha (Susan Egan), works — and the harder, more stylized light seen in Johnny's world.

Befitting a film about a man completely lost in a time warp, *Man of the Century* features several exaggerated fantasy sequences, some of which have cheerfully little to do with the narrative. These amusing bits include a scene in a dark, ominous New York Police station that's right out of the Fritz Lang *oeuvre,* and heavily-shadowed segments in which Johnny is menaced by thugs bathed in the type of hardlight seen in classic Warner Bros. gangster pictures.

One of the secrets of getting the film shot on a tight budget in 24 12-hour days was Jensen's willingness to save any complex lighting for the "more cinematic scenes set in the police station, an opium den and a nightclub. In scenes such as the nightclub bit, where Johnny and Samantha go on a really old-fashioned date, we took the time to light the close-ups for both actors separately with their own key lights, and to give them the necessary backlight."

Man of the Century was shot with an Arriflex BL-4 and five Zeiss prime lenses, ranging from an 18mm to a 75mm. Tie-ins to street lines for lighting power was *de rigueur,* since generators could only be afforded for the larger key scenes. The basic lighting package consisted of two 5Ks, four 2Ks, six 1Ks and several Tweenies. Larger lights, such as 10Ks, were brought in as needed. DuArt in New York, long known for its commitment to black-and-white, processed the dailies, while Deluxe in Los Angeles handled the prints.

Abraham agrees with Jensen that the budgetary limitations helped bolster the film's authentic feel. "There's not a great difference between today's indie world and the filmmaking of the 1930s and '40s," he offers. "Those old B-movies are not a bad model for independents, because they were all made for a price. On *Man of the Century,* we have no good outtakes; everything we shot that worked is in the film." ■

Books in Review

by Ray Zone

Cinema Under the Stars: America's Love Affair With the Drive-in Theater
by Elizabeth McKeon and Linda Everett
Cumberland House Publishing
144 pps., paper ($14.95)
ISBN 1-58182-002-X

Some of the fondest memories of my youth involve trips to the drive-in theater. I vividly recall entering the Valley Drive-In Theater in Pomona, California, which had a large screen facing Holt Boulevard. On the back of the screen was a large detailed painting of Father Junipero Serra leading a burro-drawn cart up along the Camino Real to a mission. In true drive-in style, the wheels of the cart were animated with sequentially flashing neon spokes. Once inside, one could visit the obligatory playground under the massive screen, or a monkey house inhabited by an assortment of simian creatures eager for the peanuts that visitors would toss through the iron bars during summer months.

Many people share similar pleasurable recollections of the "drive-in experience," which drew as many people to the theaters (which the trades dubbed "Ozoners") as the films featured on their screens. Two such people are the authors of this book, Elizabeth McKeon and Linda Everett, who have fashioned a pictorial valentine to drive-in theater history. A previous tome on the subject, *Drive-In Theaters: A History From Their Inception in 1933* (McFarland & Company, 1992) also offers in-depth information, but *Cinema Under the Stars* is a richer visual compendium of this uniquely American phenomenon, a charming scrapbook that features both archival images and original artwork.

The drive-in theater was invented by Richard M. Hollingshead Jr., who opened his first facility in Camden, New Jersey in 1933. Hollingshead was issued a patent for his concept. "My invention relates to a new and useful outdoor theater," he wrote, "whereby the transportation facilities to and from the theater are made to constitute an element of the seating facilities." After slow initial growth in the late 1930s and during World War II, the drive-in flourished from 1945 to 1958, a Golden Age in which America boasted a peak total of 4,600 theaters.

Many archival photographs culled from a variety of sources (including Bison Archives and the collection of Mark Bialek, president of The Drive-In Theater Fan Club) detail this most unusual of entertainment venues. Postcards, advertisements, matchbooks and brochures complete the nostalgic picture. A separate chapter titled "At the Snack Bar" demonstrates the economic importance of concessions to the drive-in theater owners. The book also features a diverse collection of stills from the Filmack company, which produced thousands of animated trailers specifically for drive-in theaters. These photos are showcased in a special section that includes eight color pages.

The demise of large automobiles in America, the gas crunch of the 1970s, and skyrocketing liability insurance rates all helped to curtail the drive-in theater boom, but nearly 800 drive-in theatres are still in business today, and they are experiencing a resurgence among those who yearn to feed their "Motor-In Habit." This loving tribute is a must for any true enthusiast.

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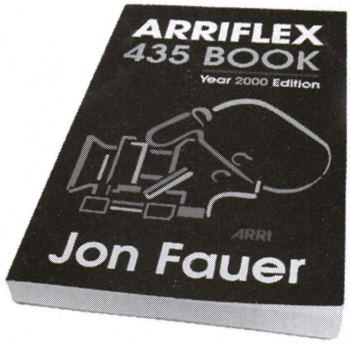

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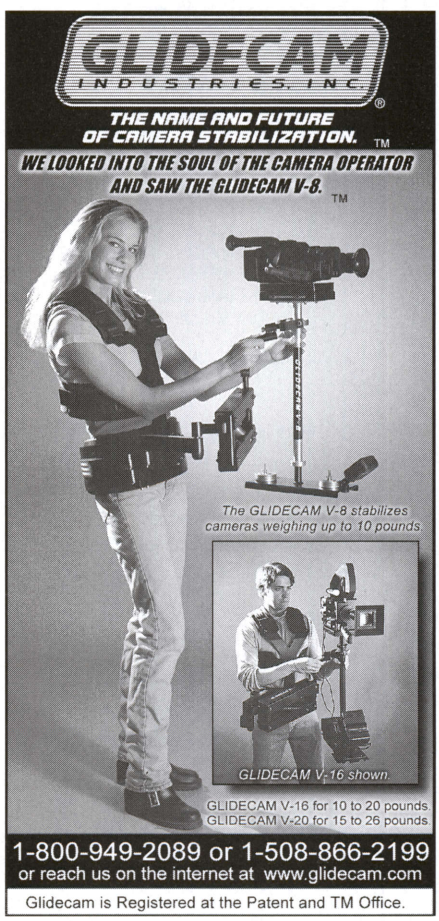

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John Carradine: The Films
by Tom Weaver
McFarland & Company, Inc.
408 pps., casebound ($65)
ISBN 0-7864-0607-0

John Carradine may seem an unlikely choice for a "Films of"-type book, but during the course of his 60-year career, the omnipresent character actor appeared in more than 200 films, and worked for a vast array of directors ranging from John Ford to Ted V. Mikels.

This is the first book to deal exclusively with Carradine's *oeuvre,* and it was obviously a labor of love for its author and his fellow contributors. In a pair of engaging introductions, directors Joe Dante and Fred Olen Ray share many humorous and affectionate anecdotes about working with the then-grizzled screen villain. A biographical piece contributed by Gregory William Mank recounts Carradine's life, both onscreen and off, painting a well-rounded portrait of the actor's Hollywood years, which included "drinking and eccentricities" as well as "garish marital woes."

What is obvious from a perusal of this work (not to mention its subject's appearances in many grade-Z horror films towards the end of his career), is that Carradine viewed acting not so much as a profession but as a calling. Indeed, he was perhaps the ultimate screen villain. Adding weight to this assessment, Mank relates a legend concerning a 1940 movie-star parade on Hollywood Boulevard. As Carradine, sitting on the back of an open car, passed by the crowd, one fan was heard hissing, "There's that rat who shot Jesse James!"

Besides his portrayal of the treacherous Bob Ford in the 1939 *Jesse James*, some of Carradine's most memorable creations include the preacher Casey in *The Grapes of Wrath*, the malevolent Sergeant Rankin in *The Prisoner of Shark Island*, a doleful Abraham Lincoln in *Of Human Hearts* and the enigmatic Hatfield of *Stagecoach*. All told, Carradine appeared in 11 of John Ford's pictures.

Carradine was a genuine aristocrat of the horror-film genre. His characterizations of Count Dracula in Universal's *House of Frankenstein* (1944) and *House of Dracula* (1945) are classic, and horror films also provided the actor with work in his later years, right up until his death in 1988. Many of these films, such as Ted V. Mikels's 1968 effort *The Astro Zombies* (in which Carradine played Dr. DeMarco) are of the "so bad it's good" variety, and the latter pages in this book read like a veritable encyclopedia of trashy horror films.

The filmography here is truly definitive and includes interviews with Carradine co-stars, many compiled by ardent fan Jack Gourley. Reviews from *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety* are also included. Carradine's appearances on television are documented, and the filmography is so complete that even small appearances in films like 1984's *Gremlins* (which includes a photo of Carradine on display outside a movie theater), or 1985's *Fright Night* (in which a portrait of Carradine is seen on a wall) are also listed. Now *that's* complete! ■

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by Ray Zone & Chuck Roblin

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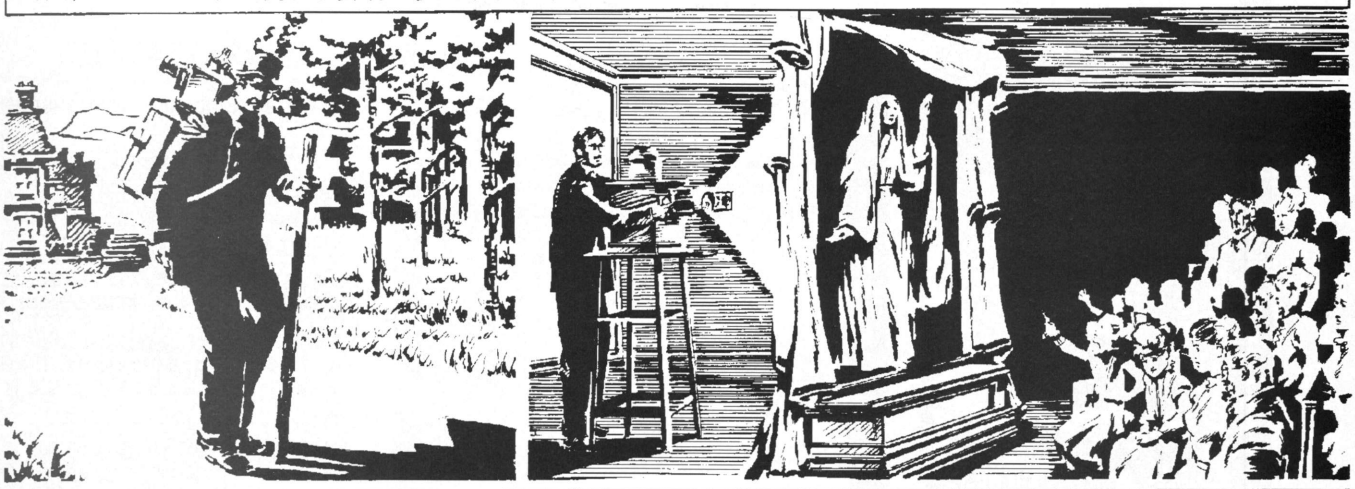

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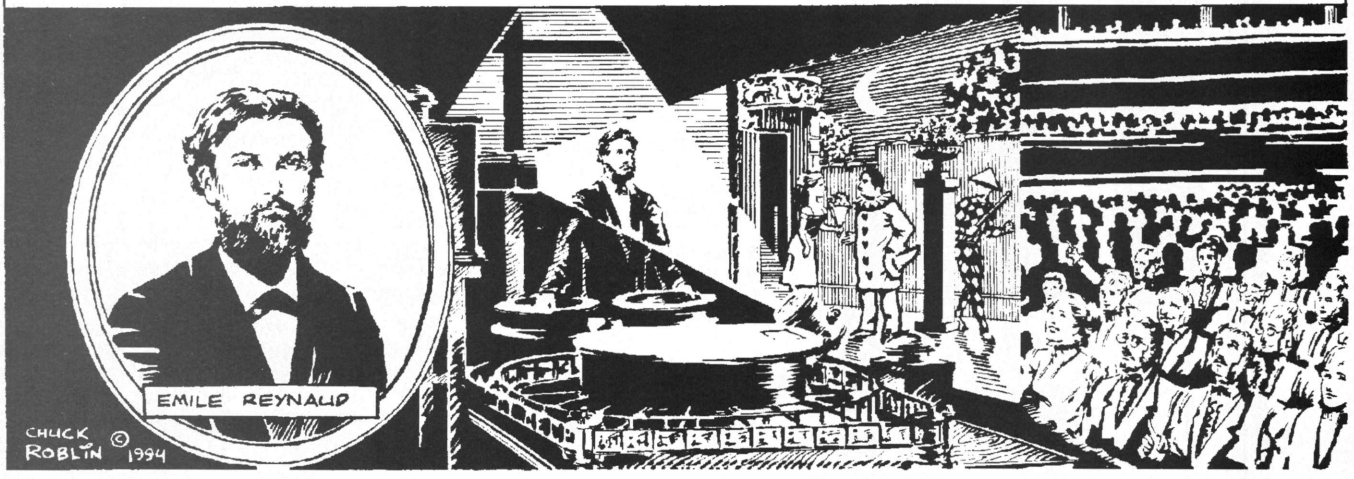

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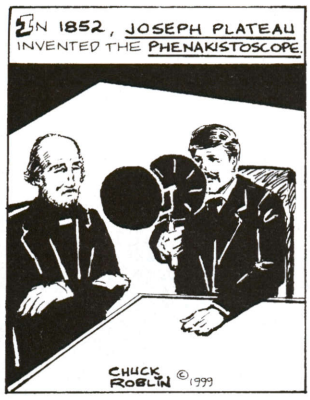

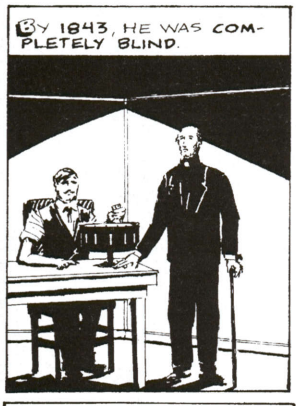

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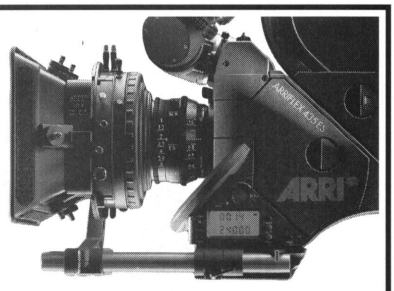

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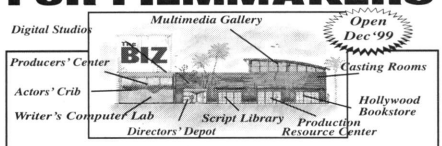

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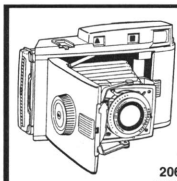

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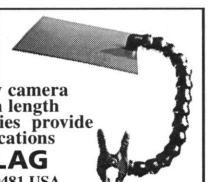

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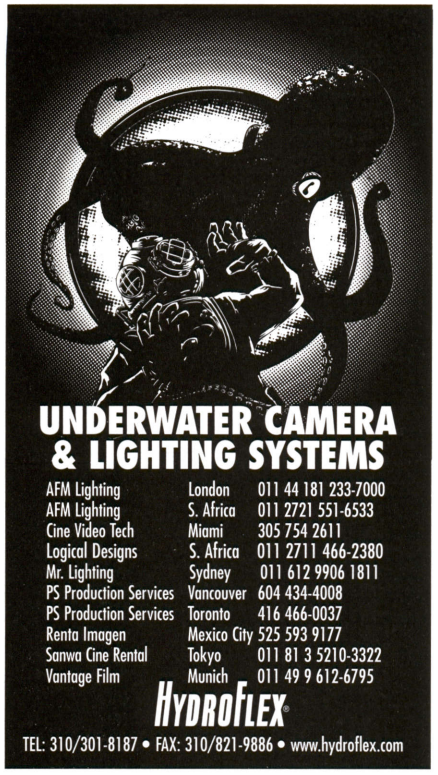

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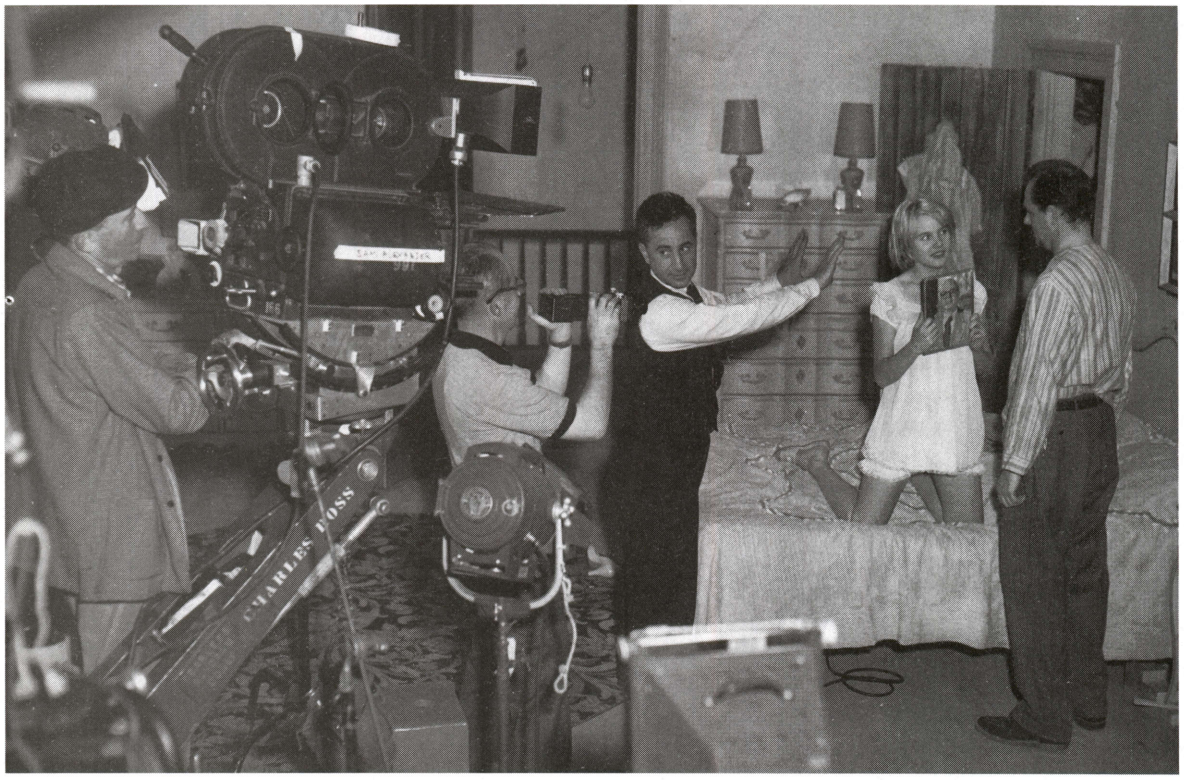

Boris Kaufman, ASC, checks his viewfinder as director Elia Kazan frames the precociously seductive Baby Doll (Carroll Baker) and her jealous lout of a husband (Karl Malden). The Legion of Decency condemned the film upon its release, but Baker's skimpy pajamas became quite fashionable.

Upon its release in 1956, the provocative Warner Bros. picture *Baby Doll* was condemned by the Legion of Decency. Elia Kazan produced and directed the Tennessee Williams-penned tragicomedy, which concerns a sultry child bride (Carroll Baker) who reacts to the onset of womanhood by revolting against her unconsummated marriage. After she finds romance with a smooth-talking cotton-gin operator (Eli Wallach), her blustery husband (Karl Malden) becomes suspicious, and the steamy, Mississippi-set story climaxes in murderous rage and frustration.

To photograph this torrid tale, Kazan once again enlisted the expert eye of Boris Kaufman, ASC. The duo had previously teamed up on a classic tale of New York crime and corruption, 1954's *On the Waterfront*, which earned both men an Academy Award. Kaufman, whose other credits include such classics as *12 Angry Men*, *Splendor in the Grass* and *The World of Henry Orient*, brought a deliberate cinematic approach to the production of *Baby Doll*, which would earn him a 1956 Oscar nomination.

In an article on the film printed in the February, 1957 issue of *AC*, Kaufman wrote, "To me, it has always been the same: to establish a style of photography most compatible with and complimentary to the theme of the story; to approach each new subject with a fresh viewpoint; to avoid the same patterns applied in previous pictures."

Most of *Baby Doll* was filmed near Benoit, Mississippi, at the Old Burras Place, an abandoned manor house on the deteriorated Hollywood Plantation — so named for a quarter-mile lane of holly bushes that led to the estate. Kaufman employed an easy, comedic style of lighting and camera treatment for the opening of the film, during which humor predominates. A long sequence of mid-afternoon action was treated in dreamy, soft light accented with menacing touches. As the husband's jealous rage grows, the illumination shifts to an extremely low key. "Shadows virtually have more body than real objects," Kaufman noted. "Thus followed a pattern of several moods blending into each other or changing suddenly at precise moments to lend dramatic impact."

Circumstances caused the production to film certain scenes on sets built at the Warner Bros. studio in Brooklyn. The entire second floor of the Old Burras Place was re-created because the floor of the actual plantation house was too weak to support the weight of cameras, cast and crew. Plans to shoot in another authentic Mississippi location — a café — were ruined when the owner of the eatery refurbished the place upon hearing that a movie company was going to use it in a film. "All the natural charm for which the place had been selected had vanished under the coat of new paint and furnishings!" Kaufman exclaimed. ■

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